

*war
Began!*

EXTRA THE EVENING
This is
how

war Began!

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66

A STORY OF WORLD WAR II

By

SIINTO S. WESSMAN

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PHOTO CREDITS

Illustrations in this book are by the author and George Swistak and Don E. Turgeon of the 66th Division and from files of the Army Signal Corps, Air Forces Signal Corps and the British Ministry of Information.

Preface

Originally this volume started out as a picture pamphlet in answer to numerous requests for photographs I had made of the 66th. But as I ran through my files, the more photos I looked at the more I thought should be included. Eventually, by sheer size alone, it turned into a book.

No claim is made that this book represents the complete story of the 66th. Hundreds of heroic deeds by Panthermen will never be recorded. Space here permits only a few which are typical.

My thanks to some swell superior officers . . . Colonels Rowan and Keating and the General himself, for time to collect these pictures.

Siinto S. Wessman.

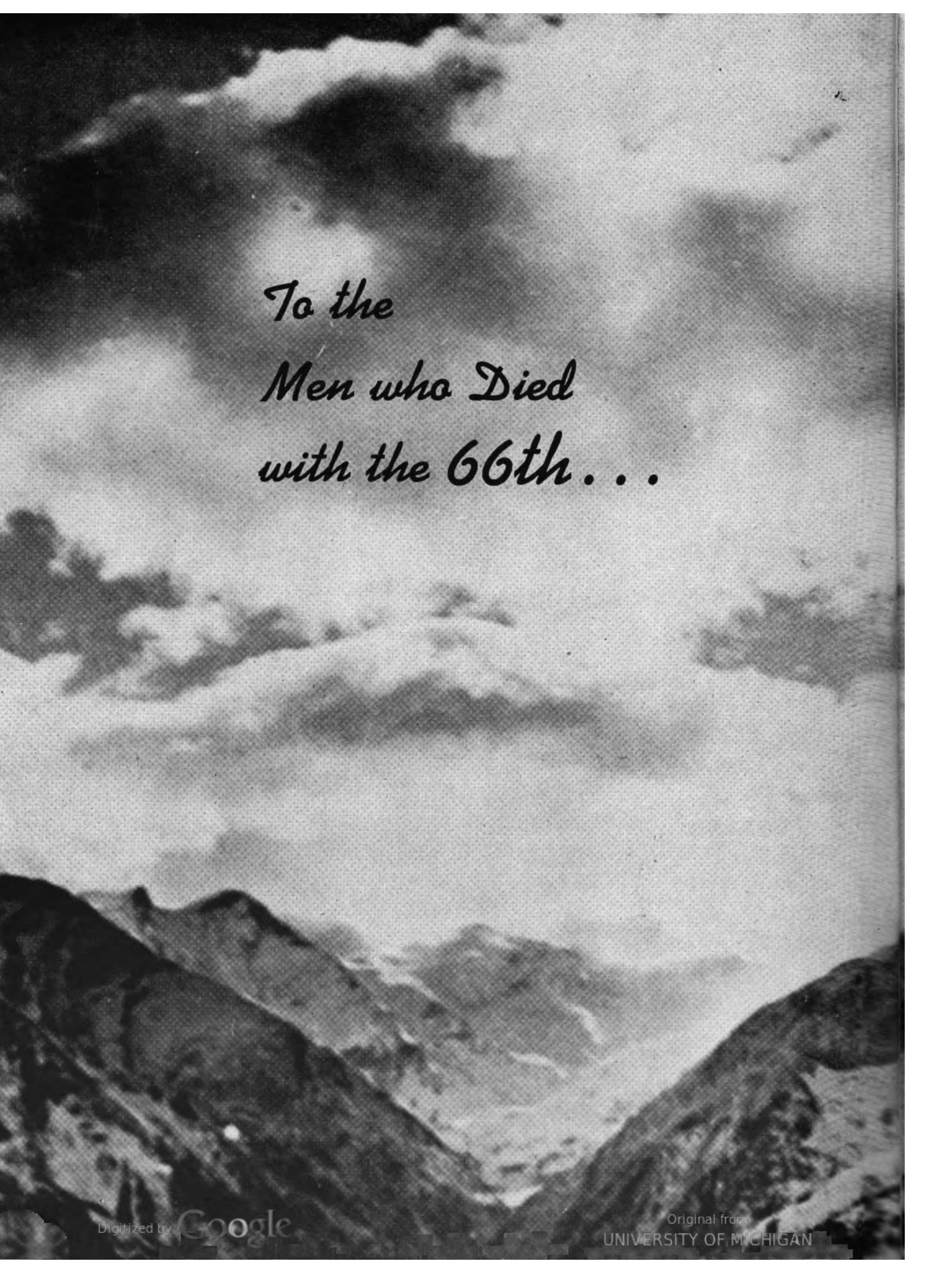
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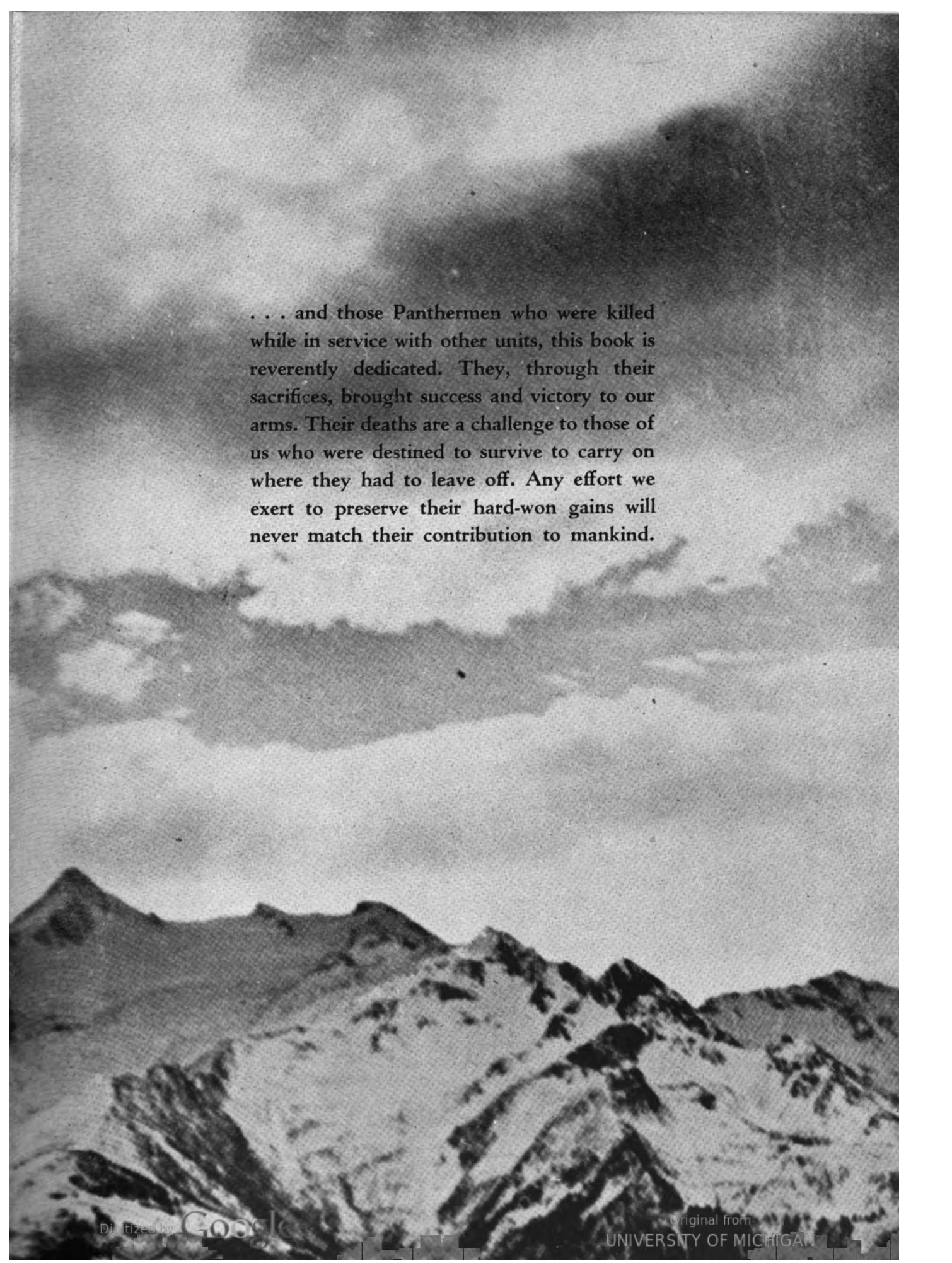
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*To the
Men who Died
with the 66th...*



. . . and those Panthermen who were killed while in service with other units, this book is reverently dedicated. They, through their sacrifices, brought success and victory to our arms. Their deaths are a challenge to those of us who were destined to survive to carry on where they had to leave off. Any effort we exert to preserve their hard-won gains will never match their contribution to mankind.

Chapter I For Meritorious Service

As World War II divisions go, the life span of the 66th was pretty short . . . two years, six months, and 24 days. That's hardly half the total time the United States was engaged in hostilities against the Axis.

So when on November 8, 1945, general order No. 107 issued by the New York Port of Embarkation ended the active career of the Panther Division, it evoked no great flurry in military circles. The action was all but lost in the millennium of World War II combat units that had served their purpose and were ready for the shelf. The 66th's ceremonial beginning was far more auspicious than its almost ignoble demise.

But if bands weren't on hand to play a swan-song and the proceedings were little more than the shuffling of a few sheets of paper from desk to desk, there were a lot of chests that swelled out a bit with pride just at the thought of having been associated with the outfit. Forty thousand Americans, all once members of the 66th, know that even if the Division is now on the War Department's inactive list, it will live forever in their most pleasant moments of day-dreaming.

To millions of others, the memory of the 66th will be either pleasant or distasteful, depending on which side of the fence they stood in the great battle. The 186,000 Frenchmen and their families the 66th liberated from Nazi captivity showered glory on our heads. They held special masses for us. There's a stained glass window dedicated to the 66th in a small church in Chataubriant, France. They will continue to toast the memory of our gallant fighters with "Vive La Soixante Six" as long as wine flows on the Brittany peninsula and in the Loire River valley.

In contrast, the 50,000 German soldiers we trampled down in victory and undoubtedly their families, too, will hold the 66th as a reminder

that if ever they set out to conquer the world again, other generations of Yanks will rise to carry on the fighting spirit of the Panthermen. We governed a million Germans along the Rhine who will probably never remember us in their prayers either. Someday, even they may realize we were far fairer and just than were the Nazi occupying forces who only plundered and murdered. They probably realize that now but won't admit it.

A survey of the 100,000 soldiers the Division processed at the Marseille POE would probably produce mixed opinions. All of them would categorically damn the wind and dust at Arles and St. Victoret but most of them would admit that under the circumstances, the 66th did about as good a job as possible in making them comfortable. Those bound for the CBI would probably have been more voluble than those enroute to the States.

Countless thousands of others, be it governors, business men or home folks in the states; Englishmen or Free French patriots; cafe owners in Paris or Poles enslaved by the Nazis; watchmakers in Switzerland or university professors in London or Biarritz; commanding officers of higher headquarters or Nazi generals who felt the weight of our attack; all who came in contact with men of the 66th were universal in their acclaim of the Division's high state of morale and the appearance and smart soldierly bearing of the individuals who wore the Black Panther patch.

That so many millions were vitally affected by the 66th . . . and all with the same peremptory and meritorious military manner, shows that in the fast-moving World War II, length of service had little relation to deed and accomplishment. No group of men served more gallantly nor more extensively in the service of their country than did the 40,000 Panthermen, men of



H. F. KRAMER

MAJOR GENERAL

Commanding General, 66th Infantry Division

the 66th. While their deeds, on the surface appeared less spectacular and by their arduous nature easily escaped public fancy, yet their contribution to defeat of the Axis was equally as great as that of any combat team. Their sacrifices were just as painful and their dead just as dead. In the 66th there were few grandstanders . . . only warriors.

By the time of this writing, most Panthermen hold the coveted rank of "mister" and can look back fairly objectively on their war experiences. Individuals will, of course, have different memories. In this short account no attempt has been made to record that myriad of memories but more to supply a chronological background for reminiscing in years to come. Twenty years from now when Panthermen read this volume, forgotten will be the unpleasantness of war and all that will remain will be the happy souvenirs that will cause many an ex-soldier to smile wistfully and sigh: "Ah, those were the days."

All we'll remember will be the splendid comradeships we knew and the wonderful times we had together. While memories of other events fade with the years, there will always be a touch of the army in us no matter how we cursed it during our period of service. We'll re-live and re-fight our battles a thousand times over and maybe even stretch a point or two. But all will be with justifiable pride in an outfit that won a tough fight against numerically superior odds.

Between now and that re-reading 20 years hence, a lot of water will go under the bridge. Then only in the light of how we exploited our conquests of battle and applied them to the huge job of building a new world, can we righteously judge who was the victor and the vanquished in this war. There will be no question as to who built the mightiest military machine and who completely dominated the field of combat. The Allies with undeterrable fortitude rose up from long military slumber and defeated nations who were preparing for war for a decade. We stand as victors now. But ever since V-J day, the battle has continued . . . not with BAR's and 155's, but with ideas, with food, with starvation and disease, with want and plenty. How we measure up in that struggle will be determined

only by the zeal we demonstrate in world leadership.

Millions upon millions of people from Shanghai to Vienna are looking now to America for help and guidance. Our star shines brilliantly on the horizon of hope for people oppressed by years of slavery and hunger. In Shanghai, disease, hunger and want are commonplace. In Vienna one can hear Strauss waltzes but Austrians still search garbage cans of occupying forces to augment their meager diet of dried peas and potatoes. Luxuries like sugar, warm water, shoes, matches, to name a scant few, regarded as necessities in the states will not be seen in many other nations for generations to come.

It's fairly simple to sit back and rationalize, "Well, they asked for it when they started this shooting match." And that's probably justifiable to a certain extent. But if there is ever to be any measure of tranquility in the world, we cannot for a moment shut our eyes to what this war has wrought. We who have seen some small part of human suffering realize it more clearly than those who stayed at home. True, they shot at us and cursed us when we beat them and often we've wondered how much the enemy would have worried about our stomachs had he won the war. We've got to set the example.

Nothing was more convincing to Yanks abroad that the American way of life was by far superior than comparison of those nations with the states. When we sailed from the New York POE, we left a country united in effort to beat the Axis. In contrast we arrived in a world filled with squabbling and instability. Then the states seemed like a dream-come-true place. We filled the ear of many a Frenchman or Englishman with the wonders of America.

We had forgotten that the states, too, were hit by the war. Those who looked to return to a bountiful land were singularly disappointed. The peace and democracy we fought for were there, all right, but they were buried in the debris of indecision and strife. Prominent were shortages, high prices and strikes. Absent were the plentiful juicy steaks, new streamlined automobiles and the many postwar inventions we

The German Commander hereby agrees to absolute and unconditional surrender at 0001 8 MAY 1945, of the Lorient area to include
 (Time) (Date)
 the Lorient Fortress and all surrounding areas not presently occupied by Allied forces, the Quiberon Peninsula, Ile de Groix and Belle Isle; of himself, of all military forces, citizens of the Reich, all of whom will become prisoners of war; of all equipment, works, utilities, armament, material, accoutrements, supplies, munitions, weapons, vessels of all kinds, and installations, all inclusive, intact and in their present state, contained within such surrendered areas; and that he will comply with all initial details for execution of capitulation attached hereto or which the Allied Commander may see fit hereafter to direct, subject only to the rules or laws of war and the Geneva Convention.

All hostilities will cease at 0001 8 MAY 1945.
 (Time) (Date)

Witnessed by:

 For the Allied Commander
 C. H. G. S. S.

 Commander of German Garrison

The 66th sacrificed a lot for documents like this.

dreamed about and which to us had become symbolic of the states. Our \$300 bonus which originally looked so good dwindled away with little tangible to show for it. We could hardly buy a white shirt or a good suit of clothes. The war had affected the states, too. It didn't take us long to learn that.

Twenty years from now we can look back at what we regard at present as a topsy-turvy world and determine either that we won the second phase of World War II or ran second best. Certainly if we are to come out on top, men like those of the 66th Division who know what sacrifices have been made to restore world order must step up and become leaders. Perhaps through the Panther Veterans Association men

of the 66th can exert sufficient influence to guide trends of history into proper channels.

These opening paragraphs were designed primarily to point out that although the 66th performed magnificently in combat, there is still a crying need for that same type of leadership. Perhaps a more effective method of driving home the point would have been to reproduce headlines of about 10 consecutive days of any newspaper. They would aptly size up the situation which, however, is by no means beyond hope. This very short chapter only records in print what everyone already knows. Its only place in a historical sketch of this kind can be to remind the reader of some of the results of the great conflict in which he took part.

Chapter II

We Started From Scratch

Florida's hot spring sun wilted the collars of our freshly pressed and starched sun tan uniforms as we stood at rigid attention on the drill field in Camp Blanding. There were 15,000 of us lined up along the shores of Lake Kingsley in front of Major General H. F. Kramer. We were there to witness and take part in the activation of a new World War II Infantry Division: the 66th. The date was April 15, 1943.

About the only thing those of us in the rear ranks (a division of men takes up a lot of room) could see of the ceremonies was somebody handing an American flag to our general. Presentation of the Stars and Stripes was made by Major General Robert C. Richardson, Jr., then commander of the VII Corp of the Second Army, to which our Division was initially assigned. For most of us it was our first glance at General Kramer.

Those up in the front ranks saw a husky man with a thick neck and powerful shoulders. His voice wasn't that of a polished orator but what he said made a lot of sense. The general cordially greeted the men and then promised such a stiff training program that no man would be lost in combat because of lack of knowledge and preparation. That appealed to most of us at the time because it showed us the old man was thinking of our skins. True meaning of his remarks didn't sink in until we started trudging, sweating and swearing over countless miles of Florida, Alabama and Arkansas. Then we knew what the general had in mind when he promised a "stiff training program." Later events proved he knew what he was talking about.

Full significance of that simple but auspicious ceremony was lost to most of us, principally because we hadn't been in the army long enough to realize what a powerful combat unit an infantry division actually is. Master plans on war department strategy boards showed we were to be part of a huge fighting machine the nation was mobilizing to grapple with the Axis powers

who in the spring of '43 were having things pretty much their own way. We were to be the backbone of the U. S. team . . . the Infantry. That's what the general said. He also told us that before our training is completed, we would have pride in the infantry—infantry that must close with the enemy and destroy him one by one before any battle could be brought to a successful close. Way back then it sounded like a fancy speech aimed more at hundreds of civilians watching us than at the troops. That's how green we were.

FROM THE 89TH

Although most of us were no more than a few weeks from some induction station, a handful of cadremen were present to provide guidance for the growth of the 66th.

As early as January 6th of that year the general along with his staff were earmarked for the 66th. A group of officers and non-commissioned officers were picked from the 89th Division then stationed at Camp Carson, Colorado. Some time before April 15, all attended specialist training schools to prepare them for their new jobs in training of the 66th. Many had years of experience as leaders. The general, for instance, spent quite some time watching the very Germans he was to fight later in the war. He was one of few American officers to attend the German war college. He served as observer of Nazi troops as they rolled into Poland. He knew plenty about the German war machine. The commander of our artillery, Brigadier General Francis W. Rollins, was a veteran of the first World War. He could tell a lot of stories about the Aisne-Marne offensive and the battles in the St. Mihiel and Meuse-Argonne sectors. Most be-ribboned of the 66th's general officers was Brigadier General George J. Forester, assistant CG. He served with the First Division in World War I and had the DSC, Silver Star and Croix de Guerre on his chest.

Before the general dismissed us that first day and we took off for Jacksonville for a steak at the Roosevelt, a movie at the Florida theater or just a walk down Main and Adams streets seeing the sights, he told us a couple more things. The 66th, he said, is a brand new division. We had no glory, no heroic past, no tradition to inherit. All we had was a lot of grueling work ahead to produce our own history and make the name "Sixty-Sixth" synonymous with stout-hearted fighters and victory.

"Ours is a great responsibility," he admonished. With those words ringing in our ears, we plunged into the job.

The general kept his promise about training. We got plenty of it in Florida. Obstacle courses we thought we had left behind in rookie camp caught up with us. There were long marches . . . sweltering days on the firing ranges and endless days of lectures on subjects varying from military law to care of a wounded buddy on the battlefield. They threw it at us hot and heavy and although it was pretty tough at first—we soon got that feeling of well-trained men and took all the training in stride. Only one thing was lacking in the Florida program. That was defense against cold. The division had plenty of that to put up with before the war was over. Early in the summer individual training for all personnel was started. The general laid down the policy for that program in these words: "To teach our troops how to kill and not be killed; to develop leadership and teamwork; to harden the officers and men mentally and physically, and to forge each link in the chain of command." The men did just that and when higher headquarters sent down a testing team, we passed it with a score of 93.4 per cent.

NOT ALL WORK

If Florida was slightly hot for military training, certainly the weather was pleasant for off-evenings and week-end passes. Citizens of Jacksonville received us like long-lost sons and in a very short time, 66th men had literally taken over the city. Silver Springs and St. Augustine, to mention a few of the other places all now hold fond memories for 66th men. One of the



Our general gets the Division's colors.

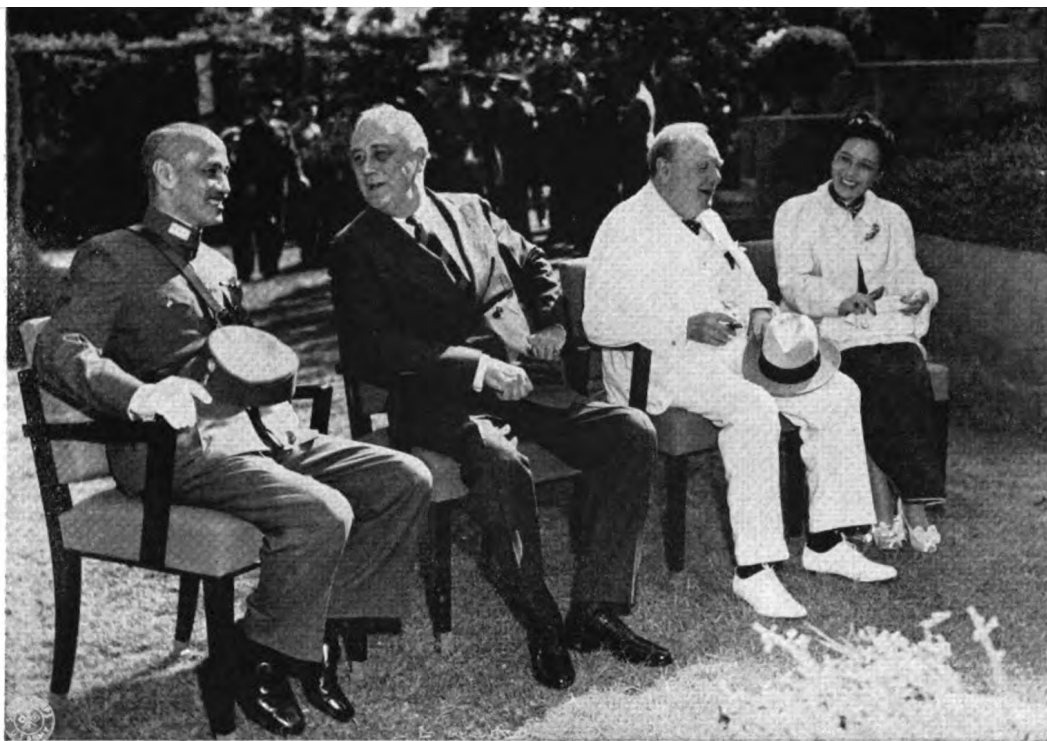
biggest hits the 66th made in Jacksonville was with the beauty contest when all the Florida belles vied for the coveted title which finally went to dark-haired Audrey Womble.

Meanwhile persistent rumors had the division going to Maryland, Tennessee, the South Pacific and England. All of these were singularly scotched when on August 7, the 66th Division made the first of many moves. We were ordered to Camp Robinson in Little Rock, Arkansas. This was just nine days before the 39-day battle for the Mediterranean island of Sicily was brought to a successful close. American troops were now firmly entrenched on the European continent. Earlier, on July 25th, King Victor Emmanuel had proclaimed the resignation of Mussolini and it looked like Italy was ready to quit the war. A month later Yanks landed on Italian shores.

Eight months at Robinson forged the division into a tough combat team. Perfection was first attained in lower echelons and then in January



That was back in the days of the old-fashioned field pieces



As the 66th prepared for combat, our Commander in Chief, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, conferred in Cairo on global strategy with Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, Winston Churchill and Madam Chiang Kai-shek. (Signal Corps Photo)

and February, the division participated on field problems as part of the XXI Corps of the Fourth Army. Panthermen will never forget those two months as the wettest, coldest and most miserable they have ever spent in the states. It was during our stay at Robinson that the colorful Black Panther patch was evolved. Among drawings originally submitted for the patch were many depicting the full panther animal. Those were rejected primarily because they resembled the tank-destroyer patch. Even as it turned out, not infrequently was a Pantherman approached with the remark: "Oh, tank-destroyer outfit, eh?"

Like Jacksonville, Little Rock claimed the

66th Division as its "very own." Newspapers referred to us as "Little Rock's Division" while writers in Jacksonville called us "Jacksonville's Division." A happy compromise was unofficially worked out and we ended up as the "Jacksonville-born Division" and the "Little Rock-trained Division." Everybody seemed pleased with that arrangement. And like people of Jacksonville, citizens of Little Rock were wonderful to Panthermen. Many a Pantherman went back to Little Rock upon re-deployment. So it was with no little reluctance that we received orders to move to Camp Rucker, Alabama, April 10, 1944.

Intensive training had by this time brought

Going to Camp Robinson was the Division's first move.



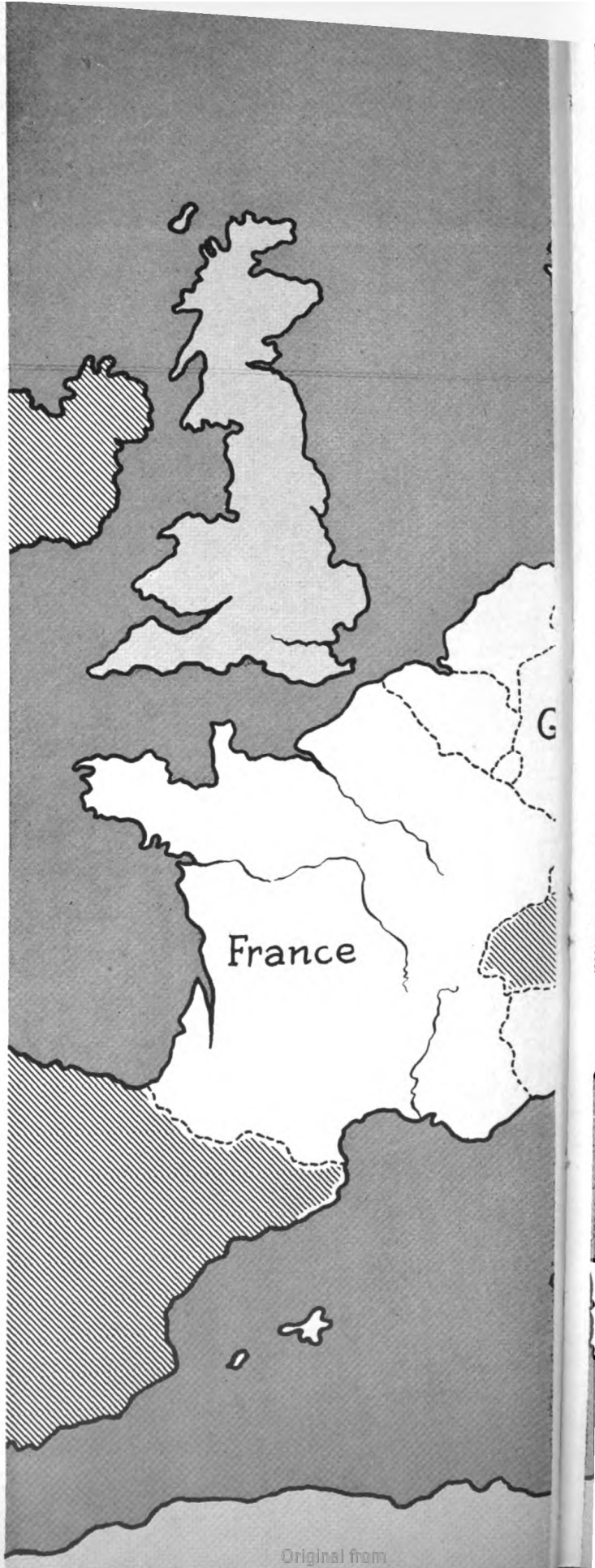
WAR AGAINST GERMANY

1 JULY 1943

As the 66th Division began training at Camp Blanding, the battle fronts of Europe were ominously quiet. Earlier in the year the Russians had defeated the Germans at Stalingrad after a long, terrible siege. General Rommel, Hitler's "Desert Fox," was defeated, and by May of 1943, all Axis forces in Africa had capitulated. The Germans were beginning to suffer defeat and the tide of battle had turned. Meanwhile the Allies girded themselves for an assault on Europe itself. Three ways lay open for invasion of the continent . . . through the Balkans, through southern France, or across the plains of northern France. The invasion through the Balkans was ruled out because it would have given the Germans the advantage of both powers on the same front. The Rhone river valley was too difficult an obstacle for conquest through southern France. The strategy for the defeat of Germany through invasion into Normandy was decided upon by July 1, 1943.

KEY TO MAP

Allied territory	Black
German territory	White
Neutral	Checkered







the Division up to full combat-readiness and everybody from the general on down was eager to get overseas. The War Department, however, had different plans. As the tempo of the war in both the European and Pacific theaters increased, the division instead of going into combat was called upon to furnish more and more trained replacements for overseas-bound troops. That process literally tore the heart out of the Division and we had to start the process of training over again. Holes left in the Division's ranks were filled by replacements from the Army Specialized Training Program, from Infantry Replacement Training Centers and the air corps. Although the air corps and ASTP men found the rugged life of infantrymen a big change from their former surroundings, they had little trouble in adjusting and conditioning themselves to the strenuous training program.

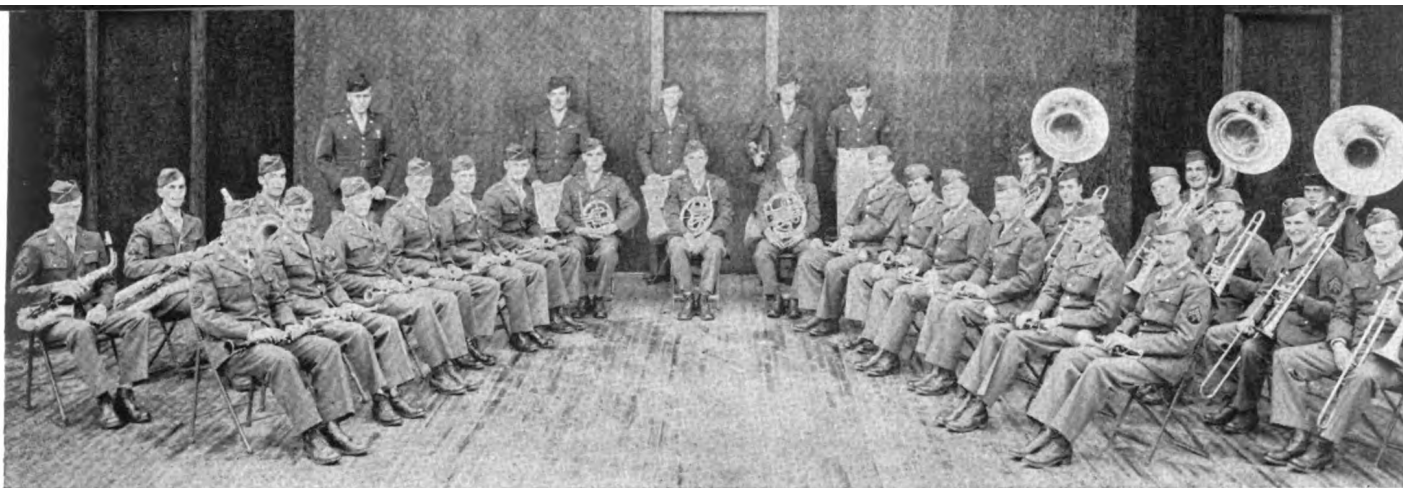
Camp Rucker, home of the 66th for the following seven months, was just about as far away from any place a soldier would call "civilized" as was possible to be. There were Ozark, Dothan, Troy, Enterprise and several other communities that afforded some slight diversion. But most neighboring towns were so overrun with military personnel that there was little change from camp life except for higher prices. Living conditions for married men were totally inadequate and many who wanted their wives with them while at Rucker were disappointed when they started looking for a house. As for recreation one of the better deals were the convoy trips to Panama City on the Gulf where many pleasant Sundays were spent acquiring tans and swimming in the salty surf.

WE WERE GETTING HOT

Work, to bring the division back to the peak it attained at the close of the Arkansas maneuvers, began. The 1903 Big Bertha in front of Division headquarters boomed out six times a week at 6:20 a.m. to signal another day of hard work for Panthermen. Squad tactics, house-to-house fighting, jungle combat, assault of fortified positions, and training of the individual soldier were stressed. At the same time personal physical stamina was built through stren-

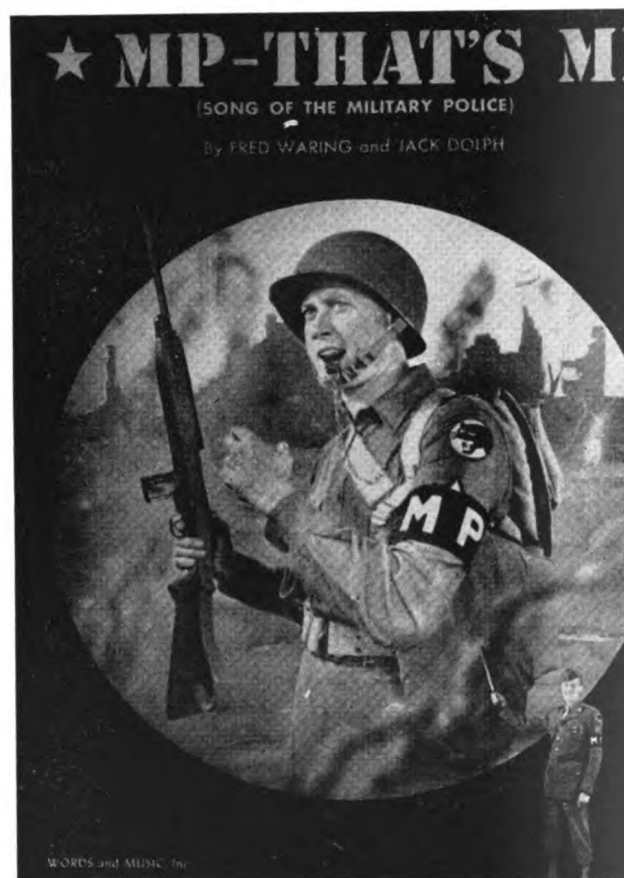


Left: Arkansas maneuvers were almost as rough as actual combat, many Panthermen will tell you. Training in the cold, wet mud proved an excellent background for later on. Below Major General Frank W. Milburn, CG of the 21st corps to which the 66th was then assigned, congratulates General Kramer on his "swell fighting outfit" after observing the men in the field.

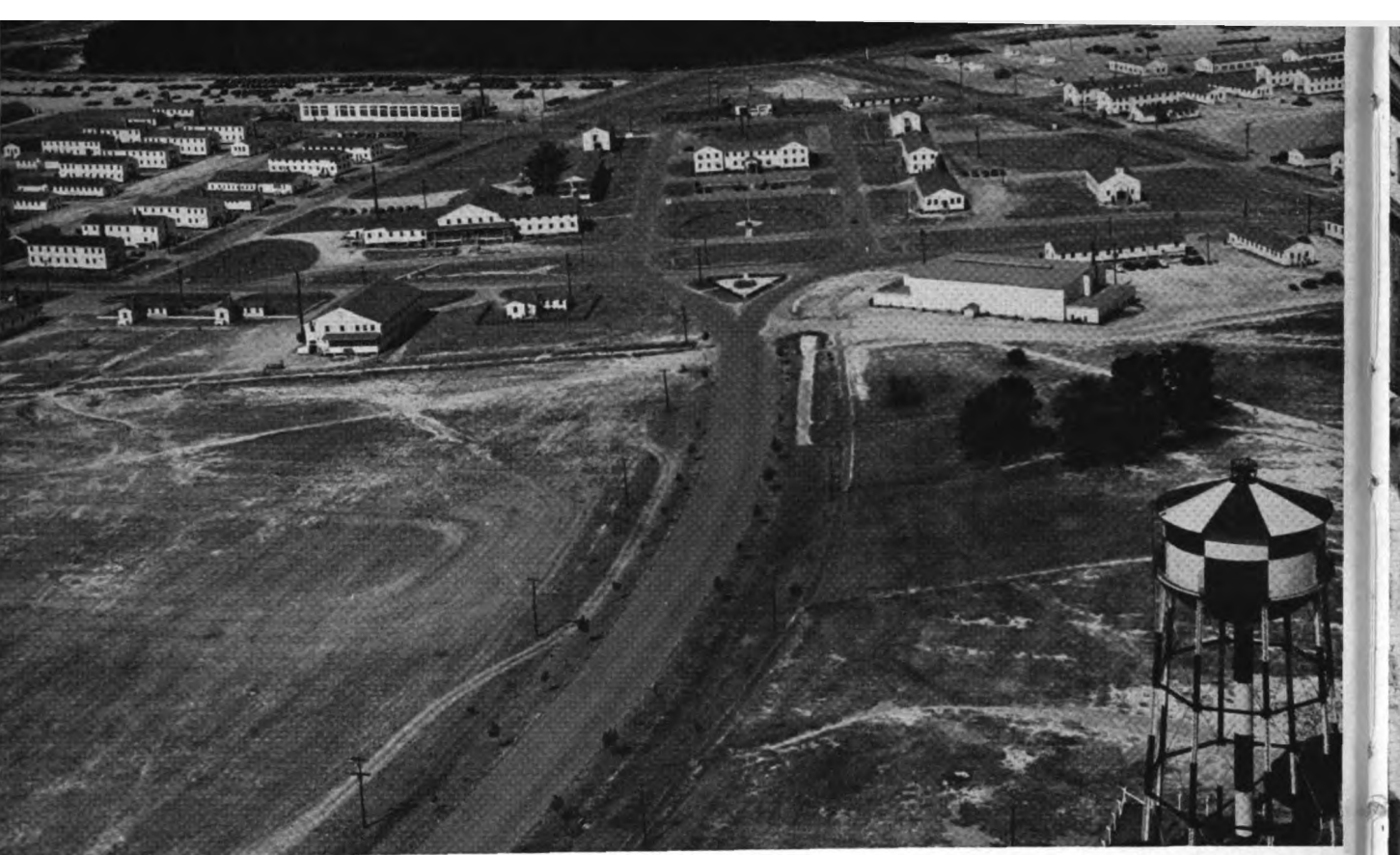


uous calisthenics and exhausting road marches with full field equipment. Through the summer of '44, the Division was once again welded into an aggressive combat team. Training, however, had its ups and downs. Like the time the 263rd Anti-Tank Company was taking a 57mm gun over Lake Tholocco on a brush raft. In the middle of the lake the raft broke and down to the bottom went cannon and all. Not a bit abashed by the turn of events, Capt. Elliot D. Moore, blithely told observers there was no cause for concern and then proceeded to winch the cannon across the lake bottom to the opposite shore. Keen competition between units brought Panthermen to a peak condition. An outstanding job was done by a crew of the 262nd Infantry Cannon Company. In the record time of 6 minutes and 10 seconds they moved a howitzer 600 yards, sent an observer to the O.P. for a fire mission and demolished the target with five shells. That speed came only after intensive training that paid off big dividends in France.

At the same time I and E (Information and Education) put on a program to show us why we were fighting. There wasn't much need of it, however. We had a pretty good idea.

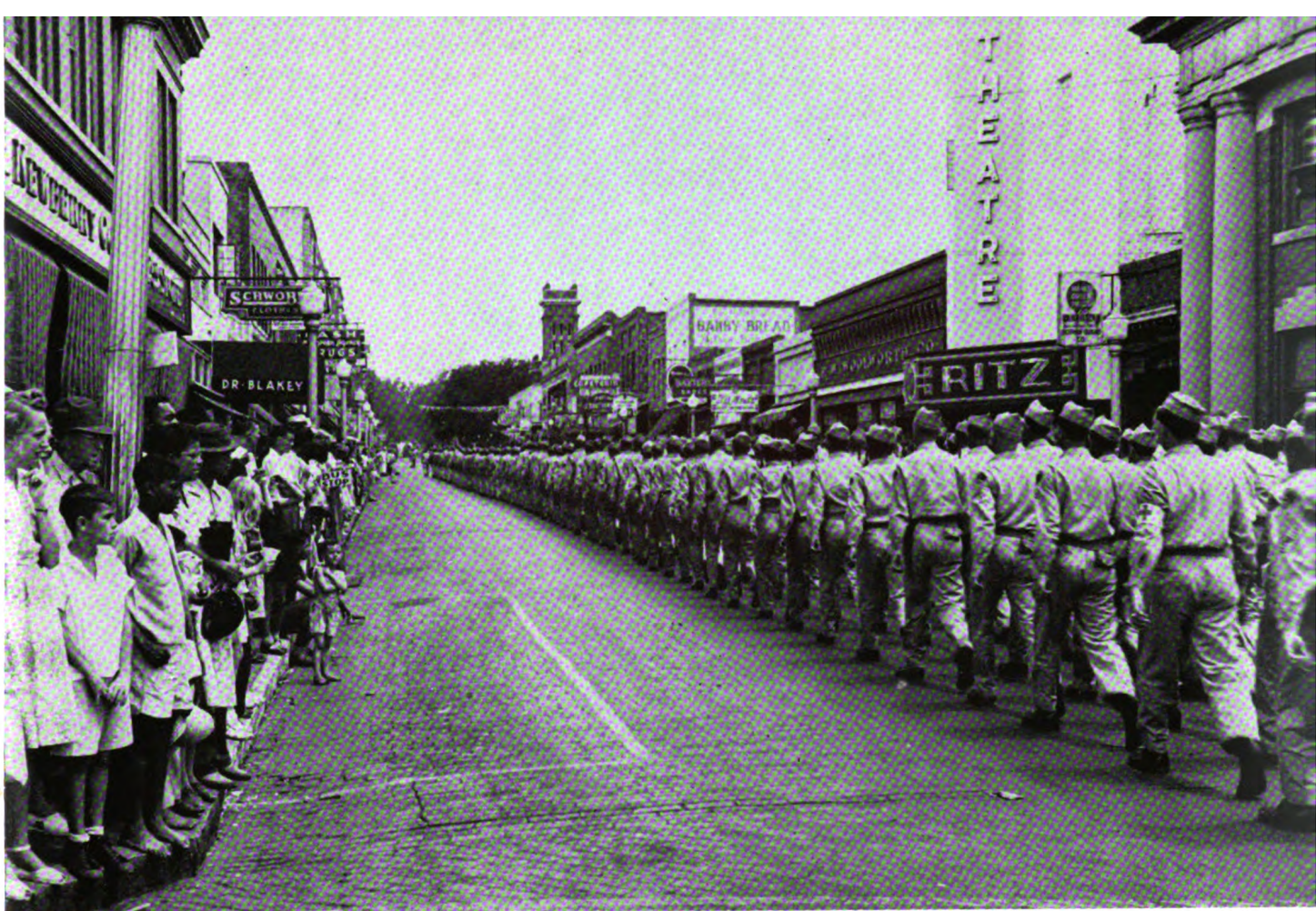


While at Little Rock the Division band made a big hit playing at USO dances and parties on the post. Fred Waring and Jack Dolph wrote a song about the Military Police and dedicated it to the 66th Division. The stirring infantry piece of World War II, "What Do We Do In The Infantry," was made the official song of the 264th Infantry.



Leaving the hospitality of Little Rock for Rucker was almost like leaving the comforts of home for the army. The view, taken from above the drill field, shows Division headquarters and the Service Club. Generals Kramer and Rollins are shown below in full moving dress. Above is Camp Rucker.





With all the intensified training going on, rumors began to fly about that we were "hot." What seemed as much as anything else to clinch the story was the swimming program for all who couldn't swim. A fellow by the name of A. J. Delaney came from the 14th Armored Division as a swimming expert. Men of the 266th Engineers built a big wooden tank at one end of the parade ground and there under a new system Delaney developed for the army, many a Pantherman learned, at least, to stay afloat. Later in the English Channel when the Leopoldville went down, that instruction proved pretty valuable. Inspection teams began to drop around regularly to see how we were coming along. We were pretty sure this was "it" and even the general at times hinted that it wouldn't be too long before we saw action. All Panthermen cheered when he talked like that.

Meantime, as every place else, Panthermen took over socially. Popular with young people

We soon found out that we had come to Rucker for only one reason . . . work. We paraded once in front of people in Dothan, 19 miles away, to give them a chance to look us over and then went straight back to the grim business of training for war. "Big Bertha" in front of Division headquarters gave little time for napping.





Long marches with full field equipment built stamina and endurance. A God-send were those 10-minute breaks.



around camp was the famous 66th Division Orchestra which later made such a hit in the ETO. The orchestra along with four other unit bands of the Division packed several thousand people into the Rucker field house one warm August evening in the never-to-be-forgotten "Royal Battle of Music." The Division also entertained as hosts to Jerry Wald and his band. The Division's smash show "You're in the 66th" was popular with the men. It played in Jacksonville where it sold four and a half million dollars in war bonds. A lot of credit for its success goes to the director, Lt. Francis X. Coakley, who later lost his life in the English Channel. Panthermen earlier in the summer got three days off to celebrate the Division's first anniversary, an occasion when the general reminded us we didn't have too long to wait for a taste of battle.

Wherever we went, we were well received. Typical of popular civilian reaction was an open letter to the general in the newspaper of Alexander, a nearby community. Said the writer to



the general: "The group of soldiers under your command . . . were an example of well-trained and well-behaved men of our fighting forces. Any time you or any member of your command is in this vicinity we will deem it an honor to have you visit our town." Although the general had a number of similar letters in his files, he always puffed a bit up when he got another one.

Every once in a while some notable dropped in to pay us a visit. Among others was Chauncy Sparks, Alabama's governor, and Ward M. Canady, the man whose factories turned out jeeps. Our baseball team walloped all comers including (to our very great satisfaction) the post station complement team. Football was about our only downfall. In Little Rock the team under a special service officer lost its one big game and in Rucker didn't get any more than into practice than we started packing up to move overseas.

Late in the summer of '44, we flexed our well-trained muscles, sized up the rumors that were flying around and drew the conclusion we should be moving out pretty soon.

The Division trained a lot for amphibious operations . . . something we never had to use and didn't complain about it, either. The soldier in the lower picture is getting set to blow some barbed wire with a bangalore torpedo.





Audrey Womble of Jacksonville who was crowned Panther Queen paid the Division a visit at Rucker, where the general even found time to putter around in a victory garden.

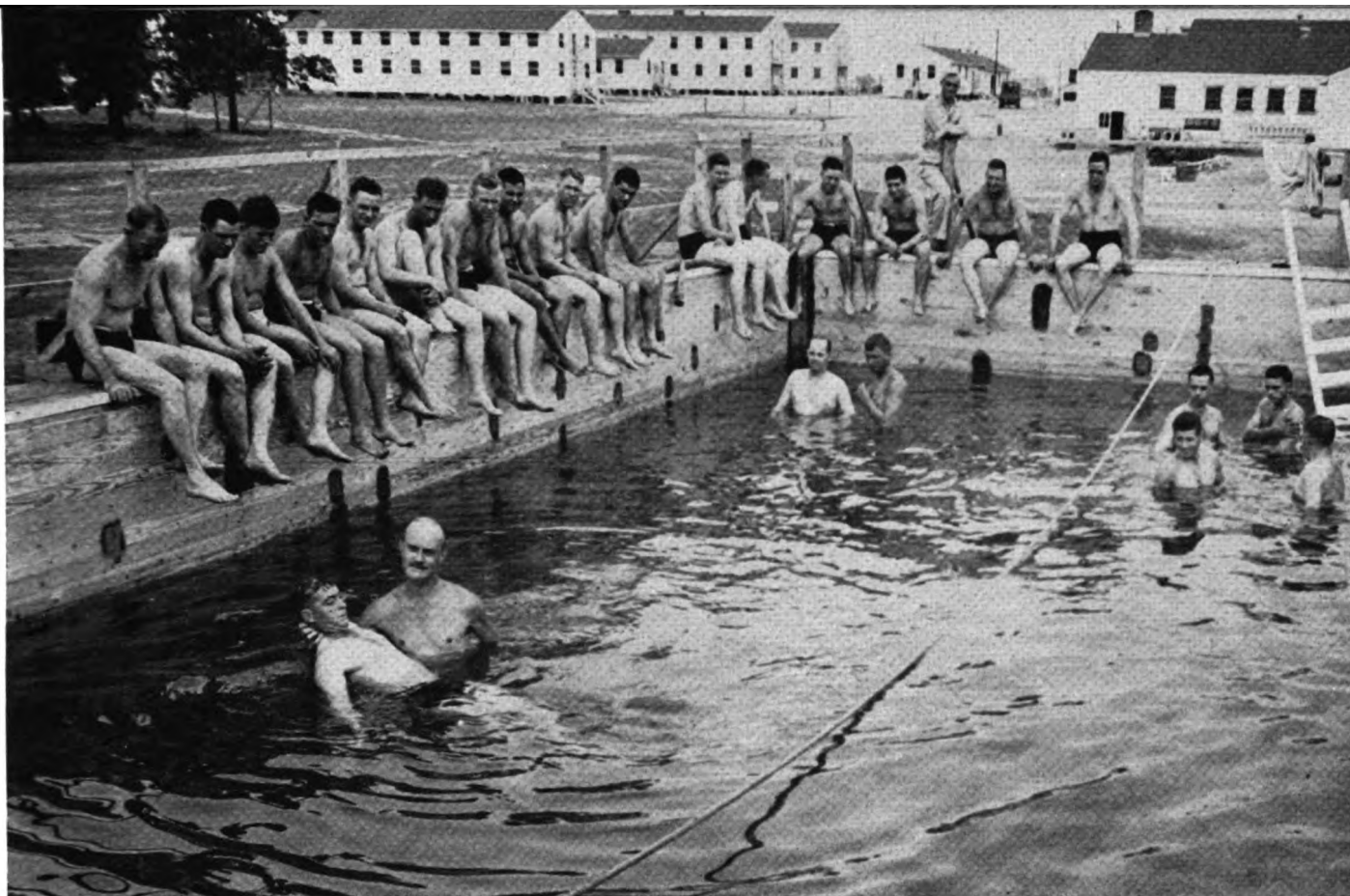


COMMAND CHANGES

There were several changes in command. Colonel James R. Hamilton, former G-4 of the Iceland Base Command, was named commanding officer of the 264th Infantry. Hamilton also had service in the Philippines and the Panama Zone. Colonel F. L. Knudsen replaced Lt. Col. John L. McElroy as commander of the 263rd Infantry. Colonel McElroy was a favorite with both officers and men. The 262nd Infantry Regiment lost Colonel George J. Newgarden at the last moment. Colonel Newgarden was one of the best liked officers in the regiment. The Division also lost Frank Allen, better known as "Mother Allen," Red Cross Director. Replacing him was James H. McClellan. Newcomers into the division by this time were building the unit up to full strength. Included were such men as Lt. Ernest Childers (263rd Infantry) who won the Congressional Medal of Honor for heroism with the 45th Division in Italy.

Late in September Lt. Gen. Ben Lear, CG of Army Ground Forces, visited us and about a week later we found ourselves out in the field again. This time it wasn't very far, just out on the Rucker reservation in what came to be known as "chigger junction." We moved out lock, stock and barrel and except for a few brushes with some Alabama rattlers, the month's maneuvering went off without incident. By that time we felt we could take on our weight in snarling wildcats and come out on top. Somewhere on the Rucker reservation we lost our "baracks complex" and got pretty used to living in a pup tent again and washing out of a steel helmet. If ever an outfit was ready to go into action, we felt we were it. According to news bulletins both General MacArthur and General Eisenhower who were just beginning to develop their offensives needed men, especially infantry. We didn't know where we were going, but secretly most of the men preferred the ETO.

Such anxiety as we experienced over a foreign assignment was short-lived. The general's promise that we were overseas-bound was fulfilled a couple of weeks later.



Panthermen had a lot of training in swimming and shooting. A. J. Delaney conducted an extensive swimming program in a pool improvised by the 266th Engineers. The Rucker firing range was a busy place.





PFC Erwin Weinstein of the 263rd Infantry Medical Detachment caught the spirit of the Division's first anniversary in this drawing.



A lot of dignitaries came around to visit the division. Governor Spark's call in the above photo was social.



Part of the first anniversary celebration was a special broadcast featuring the artillery chorus under Lt. Richard Uhl.



Lt. Gen. Ben Lear came to see if we were ready to go to war.

The first anniversary was marked by a three-day holiday during which time pass trucks carried Panthermen to the beach on the gulf.

Lt. Gen. Fredendall on a visit to the division.



Chapter III

Ozark to Picadilly

Last weeks in Camp Rucker were suspense-filled and action-packed. Getting a division overseas was a bigger job than most of us had ever imagined. The hurly-burly of preparation only keyed our spirits and made our blood tingle with anticipation of exactly what we weren't quite sure. But one thing we knew . . . adventure lay ahead.

Probably the biggest and most tedious task was equipment. Acres of boxes and miles of waterproof paper were required to envelop the Division's equipment for safe transport. Careful sealing of boxes temporarily bashed hopes of those who disliked the idea of going to the CBI. They were sure all the careful packing was for protection against just one thing . . . jungle mold. It wasn't until the first units moved out for the New York port that we had a fairly good idea it was to be the European theatre.

While organizational equipment was being packed away, everybody was rushing home for a last visit. Hundreds left every day for brief furloughs.

While the army was very meticulous in prescribing what each unit should take along, there was a dearth of information on what the soldier personally needed. In place of information, there were, as usual, plenty of rumors which, as it turned out, were almost universally without foundation. For example somebody had a friend overseas who wrote that razor blades "are impossible to get over here." In a couple of days the Rucker PX ran short of razor blades and started rationing them because they were in such demand. It was the same with other items. Men loaded themselves down with such things as soap, cigarettes, hankies, toothbrushes and shoe polish, all of which, come to find out, were plentiful in ETO PX's.

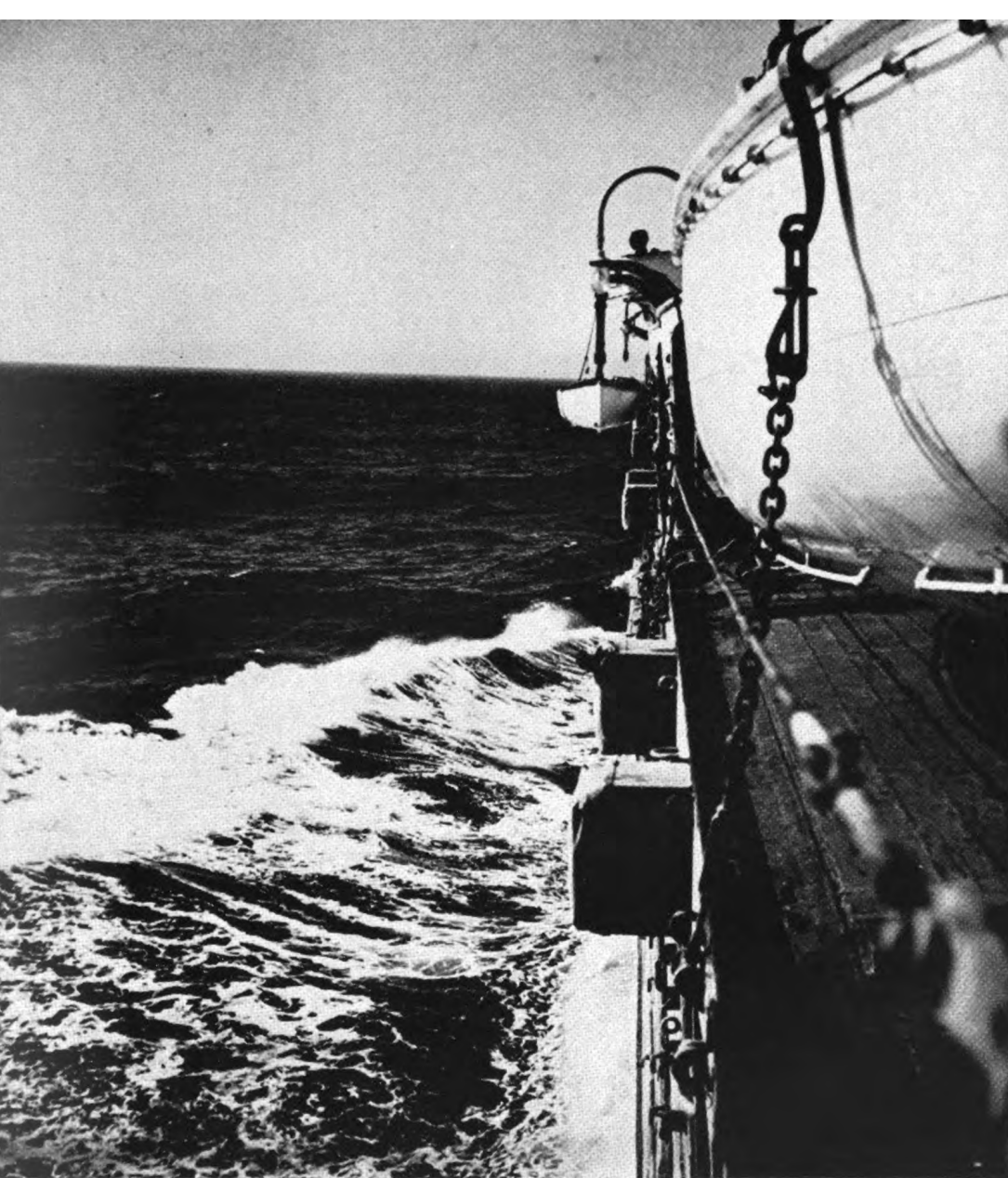
Some of the "big time operators" even went

so far as to buy quantities of cheap lipstick and cosmetics to use as barter in France. When it became pretty certain that ETO was our destination, heavy underwear, extra wool socks and even non-GI earmuffs were favorites of last-minute shoppers. Just before we cleared Rucker, we threw away our leggings and received our initial issue of combat boots. We were singularly proud of them and spent many an evening applying dubbing or perhaps some other concoction (and there were plenty of savants who knew "just the thing to make them waterproof").

There were a lot of inspections and show-downs among the troops. Daily we were reminded that we were to keep our planned movement a secret but despite the precautions taken for secrecy, everybody in the area knew the 66th Division was going to move. Big leak of information was among wives of railroad employes who planned the troop trains. Their operations were an open book. We were warned not to write home about any impending movements, and mails and telegrams were spot-checked for talkative Panthermen. Major Charles Parr of the G-2 section racked his brains night and day trying to find codes in telegrams that would give away our destination but didn't succeed in breaking down a single message. Our favorite Black Panther patches came off and everybody was made to remove from his person any article that would identify him with the 66th Division. Up to then we were proud of displaying our colors. Now we had to lose out identity to keep our movements to the battle fronts a secret.

THIS IS IT

Colder weather (as cold as it ever gets in Alabama) was setting in when initial elements of the infantry moved out. As the regiments moved out one by one, Camp Rucker began to



ADVEN- TURE LAY AHEAD!

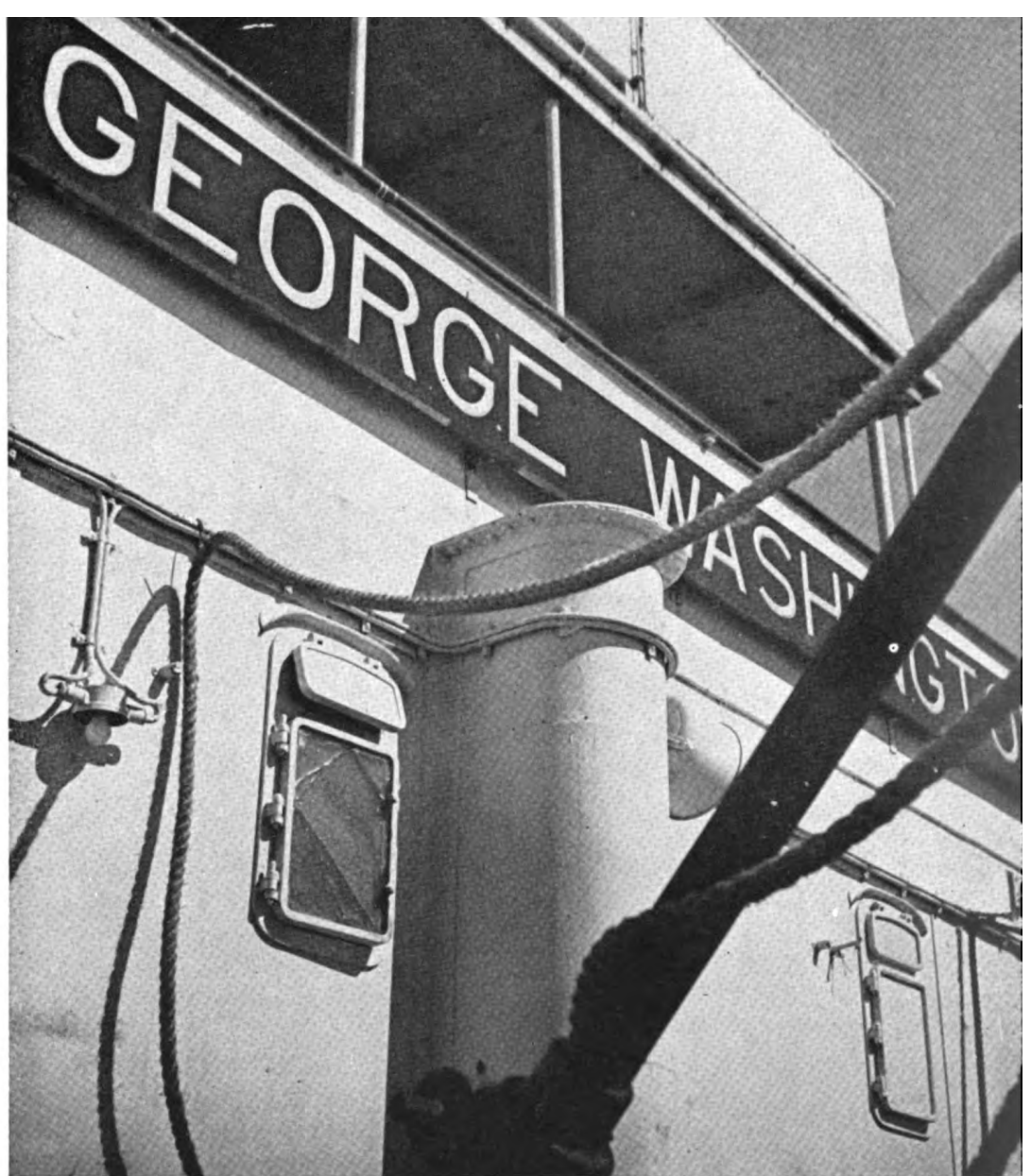
resemble a ghost camp and surrounding communities that once teemed with servicemen knew the gold rush was over.

There was usually a band on hand at the Rucker station when the troops boarded the sleepers for the two-day ride to Camp Shanks and Hamilton. Few felt any regrets at leaving Rucker.

In sharp contrast to the Hollywood version of troops heading for POE's, Panther trains were lively. There was a lot of laughing and singing and many a good game of chance developed. Shanks and Hamilton, compared even with Rucker, looked pretty grim. Both camps were

within half hour's ride of New York and lucky ones managed to get 12-hour passes. For many it was their first glimpse of the big city. There wasn't much to do except wait for a boat. Last minute property checks and physical examinations were about all that were required. The only training was on a dummy ship model where they taught us how to abandon ship properly. That was something we thought we'd never want to put into practice.

Our stay at Shanks and Hamilton was short. We didn't have long to wait for ships. General Eisenhower's offensive was slowing down and



the Germans were gathering steam to throw all they had into the Battle of the Bulge. Dough-boys were in big demand in Europe and we were nine of 11 divisions still in the states that were being rushed across ahead of schedule to bolster the coming offensive that was to crush the Axis.

Loading on to ocean-going vessels was such a novelty for most of us that we hardly had time to give the much-talked about "gangplank fever" more than a passing thought. While standing around on the pier waiting to load, we got our first Red Cross coffee and donuts from volunteer workers who brought it up on huge carts. We

were to see a lot more of them in Europe before the war was over. The food was pretty welcome because the walk from the ferry to the dock was just about all we could take in one breath; what with duffle bags, field packs, weapons, steel helmets, gas macks, rifle belts and the hundred and one items each soldier was sure he needed in Europe. With all that regalia, walking up the long gangplank and then to a bunk in the hold was no simple task . . . especially trying to find our way along strange boat corridors and going up or down the steepest stairways we had ever seen. By the time we had settled down for the ride and prowled around the boat to get ac-

WAR AGAINST GERMANY

15 APRIL 1944

Since the Division started training at Jacksonville, Yanks under Eisenhower had taken Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica in the Mediterranean Sea and had launched the drive up the Italian boot. By April 15th, Casino was under powerful attack. Meanwhile the air corps had begun the systematic destruction of German industrial potential. The Russians on the eastern front carried the power of their late autumn drive into the winter. Their troops reached pre-war Poland and the borders of Czechoslovakia. The Red Army had seized the Crimea and were preparing for the assault on Sevastopol. During this period, vast stores of goods were piled in England for the coming invasion.

KEY TO MAP

Allied territory	Black
German territory	White
Neutral territory	Checkered







High winds tossed the *George Washington* about. Often the decks were filled with spray as wintry squalls whipped the waters over the bow.

quainted, the tugs were nosing us out of the harbor, past the lady with the light in her hand and out to sea, bound for Europe.

ON THE HIGH SEAS

The entire division was spread out in a number of boats. Most of the infantry units sailed from New York harbor on November 15th aboard the USAT *George Washington* and the Navy Transport *George O. Squier*. Others came later aboard HMV *Brittanic* while many of us on the Division headquarters packet climbed aboard the *Ile de France*, former French luxury liner converted into a fast troop transport. Most large troop carriers sailed without escort, depending solely on the ship's speed to avoid German U-boats.

On the *Ile de France*, we took the southern route, considered the safest, which brought us almost down as far as Florida before we swung across the Atlantic. First day out was pretty rough and many a tough Pantherman had to meekly stay in bed until he got his sea-legs. By noon the second day the winds died down and

the sun came out. There were 11,500 military personnel aboard the ship and as the weather continued mild, spirits were high. The fifth day out we sighted a huge convoy with two large aircraft carriers, the only ships we saw. We had no idea of what route we were taking until air corps navigators aboard plotted our position with their sextants. This, of course, was strictly against regulations and "shooting the sun" was ordered stopped.

We were blacked out solid all the way and only guards were permitted on deck at night. First indications that we were reaching continental waters came one morning when we awoke to find two destroyer-escorts alongside and swarms of seagulls around the masts of our ship. Planes began to occasionally come near and we spent many anxious moments trying to figure out whether they were friendly or Ger-



We were greeted upon landing in the name of King George V.

Opposite Page—This is the quaint village of Dorchester where a large part of the Division was quartered. This view was taken a few blocks down from the Dorchester Barracks where headquarters was established. Visible are many of the churches where Panthermen worshiped.





Who will ever forget the nights spent around Piccadilly Circus in London.

man. The Ile de France kept a steady northward course.

It wasn't long before we wheedled out of a crew member that the ship was destined for Gourock, Scotland. That really set us wondering and immediately the rumor made the rounds that we were scheduled for an invasion of Germany from the north.

Nothing was farther from fact. It grew colder as we continued up St. George's Channel with England on the right in the dim distance and a sparkling Ireland on the left. Whether or not it was our imaginations, Ireland looked as green as a shamrock, just like the Irish ballads said it would. It was night as we hit the Irish sea and as we were about to enter St. Patrick's

Channel, our destroyer escorts dropped depth charges. Sailors on the Ile de France said they spotted a German sub but then, they were such awful liars, one couldn't put too much stock in what they said.

The last night out we had three alerts when crewmen dashed to battle stations and engines turning the ship's four screws were stopped to listen for subs. It was near 3 o'clock the morning of December 8th when we dropped anchor in Gourock, port for the famed Scottish city of Glasgow.

SOLID SOIL AGAIN

Next morning we awoke to find ourselves in the middle of a teeming harbor. There were as many as 18 aircraft carriers of all sizes and de-



Panthermen got a glimpse of Buckingham Palace . . .

scriptions in the harbor plus an assortment of other battle wagons that defied classification by an ordinary landlubber. We scanned the streets of little Gourock with our glasses and were pretty pleased at our first close-up glimpse of the ETO. Houses were built right up the waterfront and they appeared neat and tidy. We saw one big night club, "The Ashton Cafe," but had no hopes of getting ashore.

While preparations were going on for docking, a representative of the British government came aboard to officially welcome us in the name of the King. He reminded us that England then didn't look at its very best because of Nazi bombings and V-bombs but he promised us that we would be well received and welcomed by the British people. We were.

Lighters came alongside and in a cold winter twilight, we headed for shore and railroad stations where we boarded for Glasgow. Despite a landslide on the railroad which held us up temporarily, the long trek down the length of England to Dorchester started. It was our first ride in foreign railway cars and we immediately began to compare them with American types. We were to see a lot more of these railway cars with separate compartments and a hallway running down one side. There was no heat, of course, in the cars. The British were using all their coal in war industries. We didn't really mind because we were warmly dressed and then, too,

heat tabs were burned in mess kits to take the chill off the voyage.

It was still night when the train left Scotland and entered England through Carlisle. There was a stop for coffee and donuts and long enough to get our first look at war damage. Nazi bombers had laid large portions of the area around the railway station flat. That set us wondering how the British people could walk by the destruction without as much as a passing glance. A few months later we were the same way. Destruction very rapidly grew commonplace. A typically English rain which started that night continued the following morning and obscured visibility as necks craned to watch the landscape slip by. Most impressive sight was the 100 per cent use of land. Not one square foot of soil, it seemed, didn't either support a building or some crop. Americans weren't quite used to that.

However, with all eagerness to see the sights, an ear was constantly cocked to the sky. Newspapers were full of stories about buzz bombs and we didn't know but what they could reach us, far as the road was in the interior. There were also Nazi bombers that had the habit of zooming up when least expected.

By the time the train arrived at Dorchester a good share of the troops were already there, billeted in small communities in and around the city. The following two weeks in England were busy ones for men of the 66th. All the equip-

. . . and the Thames River with the famous Tower Bridge and Tower of London.



ment was checked and made ready for combat and finishing touches were applied on training.

MERRY ENGLAND

Diametrically opposite to Rucker, men found plenty to do during free time. Everything in England was new and Panthermen took it all in as far as time would permit. Getting used to buying things for shillings and pounds instead of dollars and cents was a bit awkward at first. There were funny little crooked streets running through most of the towns where traffic went up and down the left side of the street, much to the consternation of GI drivers. Soldiers got a big kick out of visiting the tiny pubs that line the streets and enjoyed the cockney accents apparent everywhere. There was ale and bitters, too, which didn't compare, we thought, with American beer. A few of the more fortunate found pubs that had Scotch but they were few and far between. Many of the barkeeps had long handlebar mustaches and generally before the evening was over, somebody talked him into submitting to a tug of his whiskers.

Some of us had a chance to attend services in the Church of England and found the services much like the Episcopal services back in the states. One thing we noticed in particular and secretly enjoyed was the different attitude of civilians toward us. Back in the states we were looked upon for what we were . . . soldiers, but here we were regarded as liberators and heroes. It made us feel pretty good, especially in view of the fact that these civilians themselves had gone through a whole lot more of war up to that time than we had.

Biggest and most fantastic spot in all of England was, of course, London, and a majority of Panthermen had a chance to pay at least a fleeting visit to the capital of the British Empire. Few had anywhere near enough time to see all the sights but did manage to catch a glimpse of Buckingham Palace, No. 10 Downing Street,

London Bridge, the Tower, House of Parliament and St. Paul's Cathedral.

A big attraction was that part of London obliterated by the Nazi air blitz during the earlier years of the war. The extent of damage was hard to believe. But the destruction and many anti-aircraft batteries served as a good reminder that V-2's were still dropping into London daily and many a Pantherman made a mad dash for a bomb shelter as the whirring noise was heard overhead, followed by the deafening thunder of the massive explosion. London was, as we expected, bombed; partly destroyed and utterly blacked out. But London, as we didn't even begin to suspect, was a pretty gay spot, despite the war. No soldier who ever visited there will forget the innumerable cafes and bars in the Picadilly section where streets were thronged every night with merrymakers. Behind blackout blinds, life was gay and plenty of wine flowed. Little thought of bombs there. Loose women were a dime a dozen in the streets although their wares came much higher, some demanding as high as eight pounds for an evening's entertainment. Bobbies were continually moving them along but it was a losing battle; they were outnumbered at least 500 to one.

Most of the clubs closed at midnight but there were a number of "private" clubs that stayed open until the last reveler was good and ready to go home. But the strict blackout and heavy London fog combined to make late movement so difficult as to discourage such practices for strangers in the city.

Meanwhile the general was in London, too. He was getting final orders for the Division. A couple of days before Christmas we were alerted; ammunition was issued and we started moving towards the ports of Weymouth and Southampton. We boarded LCT's and troop carriers, fully-equipped to strike at the enemy. But the enemy struck first. We were headed for one of the worst naval disasters of the European war.

Chapter IV

Christmas Eve, '44

By the time we began to associate a sixpence with an American dime and knew better than to look for the druggist when what we really wanted was the "chemist," it was time to move again. Movement to the ports of Weymouth and Southampton was ordered by General Kramer on December 23rd. Motorized elements went to the ports in convoy and boarded LCT's while others arrived at the ports by train. To the Division, used to moving by now, the movement to the continent evoked no special comment. It was pretty routine to the navy, too, used to ferrying troops ever since D-Day. Only one gripe was heard: "What a heck of a way to spend Christmas . . . on the English Channel." There was the usual hubbub at the docks while men snacked on Red Cross coffee and donuts waiting for their turn to leave.

At the Southampton docks elements of the 262nd and 264th Infantry regiments waited on the piers to load on the ill-fated Leopoldville. The Leopoldville was originally a Belgian ship but was taken over during the war by the British for transport duty and its name carried the prefix "His Majesty's Transport." Officers on the ship were English but most of the crew were Belgians who spoke very little or no English. Contrary to the usual procedure, the crew of the ship wasn't informed in advance of the units coming aboard so no loading plan was ready when the troops arrived. Instead they were guided to compartments as they loaded on a "first come first served" basis. Men were checked off company rosters as they hit the gangplank and then were led below by British crew members. Loading took all night.

The Leopoldville and Cheshire nosed out of Southampton harbor in the company of two escorting destroyers about 9 o'clock on the morning of the 24th. A cold wind whipped down the English Channel and the rough sea tossed the heavily-laden ship about considerably. Ninety-five miles away . . . normally a nine-hour run,

lay the destination, Cherbourg, and beyond that one could only guess.

ALLIED FRONT BULGES

We were entering combat just as the enemy was making his most determined effort to break the back of the Allied offensive. Only scattered reports were available on the progress of the battle because of the lack of newspapers and radio reports. The German offensive, popularly called "The Battle of the Bulge," began eight days earlier on December 16th when General Von Rundstedt, acting on direct orders from Hitler, attacked Allied positions between Monschau and Trier. This front was held by only four Allied divisions; other units were being used at the time to bring about decisions elsewhere.

Rundstedt was able to gain the initial advantage of surprise in his attack by heavy ground fogs that concealed troop concentrations in the heavily forested area. He struck with eight panzer divisions on a 40-mile front and broke through the VIII Corps lines. Backing his attack was considerable air support and plenty of artillery. His goal was apparently Antwerp.

To meet this threat, General Eisenhower took prompt action. All available reserves in the Central Army Group were used to strengthen northern and southern flanks of the Nazi penetration and the British corp was assigned to hold the line in the Meuse and Liege area. Marshal Montgomery was in command of our forces north of the bulge and General Bradley was in charge on the southern flank. The 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions were brought up from theater reserve with the 101st assigned to Bastogne where they made their heroic stand against overwhelming odds. It was here that the German ultimatum for surrender of American troops brought the unmilitary but expressive answer, "Nuts."

Then developed the battle of the Ardennes where American troops fought brilliantly under most exhausting conditions of weather and ter-

rain. Tide of battle began gradually to turn when the U. S. Third Army under General Patton stopped the advance of German columns on the southern flank of the bulge and opened an offensive on a two-corps front. But the German was still trying desperately to push ahead, using all in his power to cut down the might of our resistance. His V-2 bombing of London and Antwerp increased in ferocity. Submarine warfare to cut supply lines and reinforcements was stepped up. That was the military situation when the 66th left England for the continent.

TORPEDO TO THE STARBOARD

Aboard the Leopoldville, most of the men were pretty tired after a sleepless night and prepared to do some "sack time" during the voyage. "Bunk duty" was considered a good seasickness preventive. Officers were assigned to each compartment to maintain control and preparations were made for boat drill under the direction of Captain Bowles (British Army, ship's adjutant).

Lt. Col. John R. Martindale, commanding the Third Battalion of the 262nd Infantry, spoke over the ship's intercommunication system and announced the boat drill. He ordered all troops below to don life preservers and stand by for the simulated distress signal. When the signal came, four British warrant officers (assistants of Captain Bowles) lead each compartment to its boat station. When all the compartments were reported cleared, Colonel Martindale and Captain Bowles conducted an inspection of each boat station and made arrangements to supply life preservers to all personnel aboard not yet equipped. Boat drill completed, the men were dismissed.

There was little to break the monotony during the remainder of the trip. Boats were no longer novelties to the men so about the only diversion was an occasional card game or a discarded special service pocket edition. Thoughts of most of the men were thousands of miles away beyond the Atlantic with the folks at home who were getting ready to celebrate Christmas. Many a mind's eye pictured families around the Yule tree opening presents, wondering if the APO got off last minute gifts without a hitch.

Shortly after 3:15 p.m. when the evening

meal was finished the dull thud of exploding depth charges brought many back on deck. The destroyer escorts had apparently picked up a U-boat and were making a try for it. The mild excitement died down quickly as the destroyers gave up chase for the sub.

Cherbourg was about six miles off and in the gathering dusk, some of the lights were already visible. A few of the more spirited ones in the hold were even singing Christmas carols and the familiar melodies floated up through the airvents and hatches. The ship's clocks showed 10 minutes to 6, Christmas Eve. Panthermen were about to get their first taste of war. The enemy torpedo struck.

Lt. Robert M. Wurdeman of Minneapolis had just come off watch in the hold and was walking along the outer deck of the ship along the starboard rail. Despite darkening skies there was still enough light to see the other ships in the convoy. When almost amidship, he was startled by a cry from the crow's nest: "Torpedo to the starboard." Leaning over the rail, Lieutenant Wurdeman gasped as he saw a slender, silver-colored torpedo approaching the boat, about 50 feet away. There was a long white wake behind the torpedo that extended perhaps 200 yards. As the lieutenant clutched for the rail to brace himself for the shock, the torpedo hit, shaking the boat from stem to stern. What Wurdeman described later as debris and bodies were hurtled high into the air by the force of the explosion. He heard cries for help from the hold as he turned to race for his compartment to evacuate his men.

THE SEA POURED IN

In the starboard aft of the Leopoldville, down in the compartments below the water line, most of the soldiers were asleep when the torpedo ripped through the steel hull of the boat and exploded with a blinding flash. Shock of the terrific blast obliterated the compartments in the vicinity of the strike. Personnel were smashed against walls of the hold. Steel beams and girders supporting the hull of the ship were snapped like matchsticks and the salty sea poured in on the Panthermen, snuffing out those who still re-

mained buried alive under the debris. Staircases which could have offered an avenue of escape were demolished and buckling iron walls sealed many emergency escape hatches. Cries of wounded were quickly quieted by the intrushing waters and soon only the gurgle of the sea was all that came from the stricken compartments as they filled to the ceiling.

The ship's alarm sounded and almost immediately other Panthermen began to evacuate compartments for their proper boat stations. The ship stopped and despite blackout regulations, all the lights were turned on to facilitate work of evacuating wounded from the hold. Meanwhile the two destroyer escorts gave chase to the submarine and dropped a number of depth charges about a mile from the stricken Leopoldville.

Despite choppy seas, confusion of the explosion and the nauseating smell of burnt powder, men filed out to the deck with calmness and perfect discipline. Actually only those who came from areas near the blast knew what had happened. Others conjectured over the possibility that the craft struck a mine.

Few on deck knew of the awful turmoil and human agony wrought by the torpedo in the hold. Although well shaken most of them managed a smile and a wisecrack. Not until the groaning and dismembered wounded began appearing in litters from below did full realization of what really happened dawn on many of the men.

Helped by their buddies, survivors of the compartments that bore the brunt of the explosion struggled to the deck. Soaked by flooding waters, they stood shivering but uncomplaining in the chilly wintry winds that now began to rock the Leopoldville with increasing violence. Lucky ones escaped from the rapidly filling compartments by sheer acts of Providence.

Pfc. Walter E. Blunt of Ursa, Illinois, tried to get out of his compartment through a hole blown in the wall. As he struggled to get through the hole, the water continued to rush in until it washed completely over him each time the boat lurched. Blunt's breath was getting shorter and as he struggled desperately the iron jaws of the hole seemed to clutch him tighter. As Blunt was about to give up, he heard a voice from above:

"Give me your hand, son." It was Blunt's company commander. He was saved.

Corporal James W. Pate, describing conditions in the compartment housing F Company of the 262nd Infantry, one of the worst hit by the explosion, said the blast completely tore away the staircase. There appeared no hope of escape from the compartment which was rapidly filling with water until some one lowered a rope ladder. Pate said he saw one of his sergeants dazed by the explosion but before he could reach him, the waves had washed him away.

Officers and enlisted men joined in gallant but oftentimes futile attempts to rescue Panthermen trapped in the holds. They worked feverishly to save all lives possible until it became certain all hope was lost and the Leopoldville was about to sink.

Outstanding examples of those who went repeatedly into flooded holds at no thought of peril to themselves was Lt. Col. Ira Romberg, commander of the 264th Infantry Regiment's First Battalion. After doing a Herculean job in rescuing men, Colonel Romberg, wounded, ordered himself lowered by rope through a jagged hole into a flooded compartment to seek out a drowning Pantherman. In this final act, although he was unsuccessful in saving the soldier, he so exhausted himself that when the ship went down he was unable to save himself. S/Sgt. William Hinkle pretty well summed up what men aboard the Leopoldville thought of Colonel Romberg when he said: "All who served him know that if he hadn't paid the toll with his life that night, he would have been the man to follow into battle." Colonel Romberg was not alone, however. Many other heroes died that night.

The wounded were a serious problem as they were carried to the open deck and the ship's hospital. The hospital filled quickly and medics worked on open decks that soon swarmed with wounded and dead. Magnitude of the disaster permitted first aid to only the more seriously wounded. Those with broken arms and legs were given only morphine injections. Open wounds were hastily bandaged to stop the flow of blood, leaving more extensive medical attention to some future time.



Loaded down with combat gear, Panthermen boarded ships for France at Weymouth . . .

Although many of the crew assisted in the rescue work, they seemed utterly incapable of handling the situation and had Panthermen not taken matters into their own hands, the loss would have been much greater. Crewmen made no effort to take the lead in lowering lifeboats. Instead, they lowered one single boat into which many of them piled, bag and baggage. Contrary to law of seafaring men, they abandoned the ship.

Rankled Panthermen indignantly watched them begin pulling towards shore. The men were able to lower a few lifeboats for the wounded but in many cases, tossing seas and desertion by the crew resulted in lifeboat upsets.

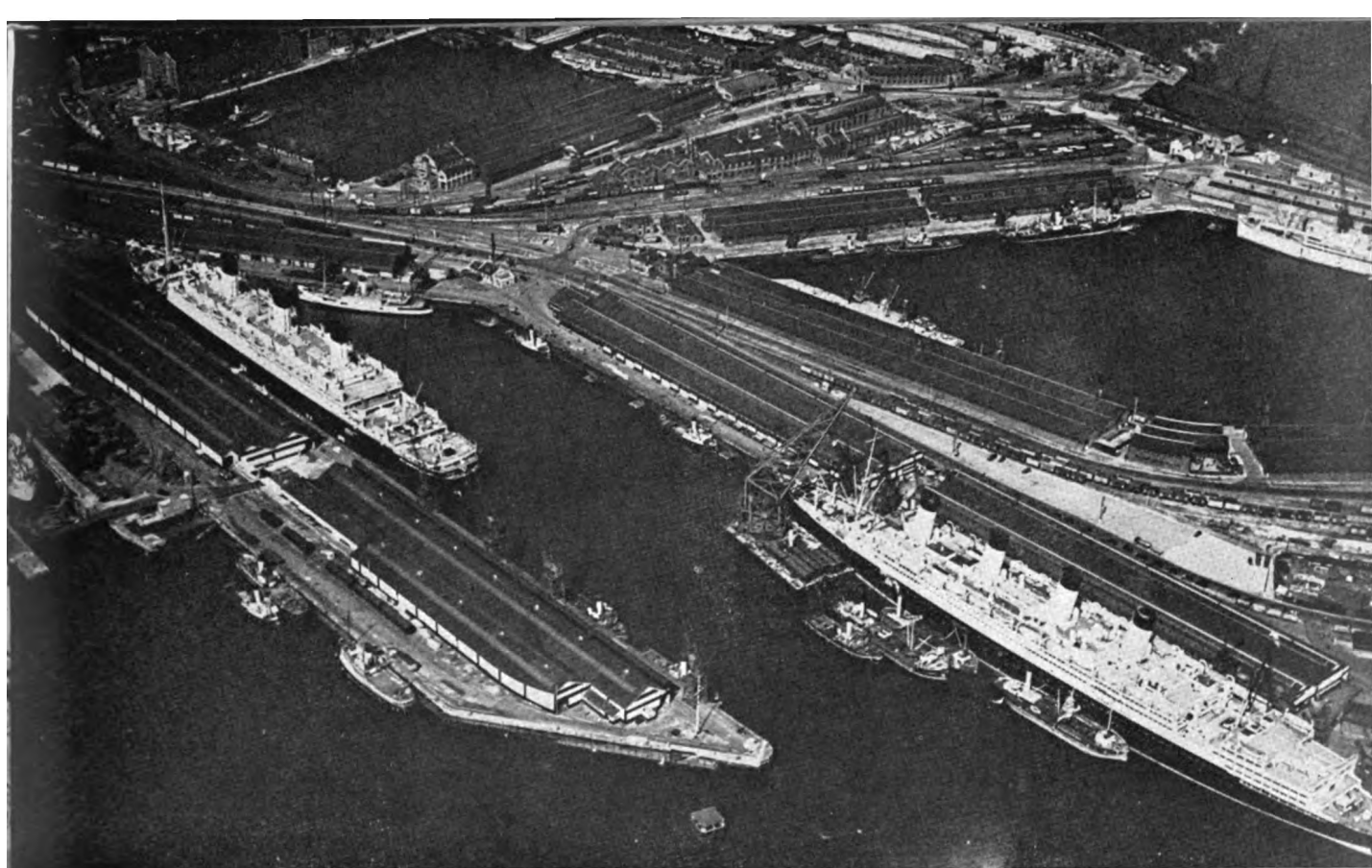
THE LEOPOLDVILLE BEGAN TO FILL

Shortly after the torpedo struck, the Leopoldville started to list to the port as the hull gradually filled with water. Sight of Cherbourg

harbor lights and the proximity of the destroyer escorts and several tugboats and coast guard cutters that were heading out from shore brightened spirits of the men. Those not wounded were for the most part unafraid and in good spirits. They stood quietly on the decks waiting further orders, smoked and joked about the delay in getting to Cherbourg. First Sergeant C. P. Woods of B Company, 264th Infantry, even managed to worry about his sick book.

All cabins were stripped of life belts until everyone on deck was equipped. Many gave up overcoats to those who were suffering from exposure. Others who were soaked huddled out of the wind with blankets around their shoulders to keep warm.

When it became apparent that the Leopoldville would be unable to reach Cherbourg under its own power one of the escort destroyers, HMS Brilliant, announced over a loudspeaker that it



... and Southampton where the ill-fated Leopoldville was moored.

was coming alongside to take on as many soldiers as it could hold.

The Brilliant pulled alongside the starboard side of the stricken vessel and after considerable difficulty because of heavy seas, managed to get several lines to the Leopoldville. As soon as the destroyer was made fast, transfer of litter cases began. Wounded were strapped to litters and transferred from the Leopoldville's C deck to the open deck of the destroyer.

Buffeting seas and darkness made this an extremely hazardous operation and several litter cases were washed overboard. As soon as the transfer of all available litter cases was completed, soldiers began jumping to the safety of the destroyer's decks. Officers lined the men up along the gunwales of the Leopoldville and when tossing waves brought the destroyer near, gave the signal to jump. In this operation timing was of supreme importance as the gap between the weaving vessels opened and closed. Some hesitated when the jump signal was given and leaped too late. Instead of landing on the deck of the

destroyer they sank into the dark waters between the two ships and were crushed when the next wave brought them together again. Others wearing steel helmets received head lacerations when they hit the destroyer's decks. Twice the cables holding the two crafts together snapped under the terrific strain and each time the dauntless crews put out new cables.

When the Brilliant was filled it was cut loose and started pulling away from the Leopoldville. Optimism aboard ship faded but was rejuvenated when it was announced the destroyer would return for another load. That was the last seen of the Brilliant that night. Her hull was so seriously damaged from scraping against the Leopoldville that the boat was unable to make another trip without danger of foundering.

MORE SHIPS TO THE RESCUE

By this time a number of small craft from the Cherbourg harbor, many of them never intended for sea travel, were encircling the Leopoldville their lights making a brilliant spectacle



Lieutenant Robert M. Wurdeman of Minneapolis was on deck of the Leopoldville when he heard the look-out cry "Torpedo." He saw the torpedo streaking through the darkening water towards the ship.

of the disaster. One of the tugs arrived with a brightly spotlighted American flag. It drew a big cheer from Panthermen. As the tug drew nearer, Panthermen saw the Yankee sailors and one of them shouted: "Merry Christmas, Navy." Came back the answer: "We're Coast Guard, not Navy. Merry Christmas to you."

Lack of direction muddled rescue work. One large boat that came from the stern was prevented from tying to the Leopoldville by a group of soldiers attempting to lower a lifeboat. Other boats that tried to get near were hurtled against the Leopoldville and seriously damaged. Many lifeboats were toppled end first into swirling waters. Others foundered when inexpert soldiers tried to row them away from the sinking ship. Attempts to lower lifeboats were made despite the standing order that no one would abandon ship until ordered by the captain.

The abandon ship order, however, was never given, even as the Leopoldville went down into Davy Jones' locker. Once the rumor started that abandon ship had been given and men started to climb over the side but quickly got back on deck when it became clear the order had

not been issued. A small tug that bobbed up and down on the waves like a cork tried to make fast to the aft of the Leopoldville. Heavy seas continually pounded the craft against the now badly listing Leopoldville. Two sailors precariously perched themselves on the bow of the tug to catch any Panthermen who dared attempt jump the gap. Several times the rocking boat almost tossed the pair into the sea. Several men attempted the jump. Some made it . . . others were crushed between the two boats. An attempt was made to transfer several stretcher cases but the idea was abandoned when it became apparent they would only end up in the channel. The tug was pounded so heavily that it had to pull away and, instead, started picking survivors out of the water.

By now the list of the Leopoldville became so great men could stand on deck only by holding on the rail. Litter cases started sliding towards the ocean and volunteers had to stand by to hold them on the ship. Men on deck watched with fading hopes as the top of the mast reached farther and farther down to the sea.

"NO DANGER"

It was about 8 o'clock now, two hours and 10 minutes after the torpedo struck. A voice came over the ship's speaker system renewing the statement that the boat was in no immediate danger and announced that crafts were coming in from Cherbourg to tow the vessel into port. A mighty cheer greeted this bit of news and spirits rose again.

First indication that the end was near came about twenty minutes later when a low rumbling below decks grew into a terrifying crescendo and ended with a mighty blast that shook the entire ship. Ventilators were blown off like champagne bottle corks. Hatch covers where medics had laid wounded men splattered open spewing splinters and men into the sea. A second explosion followed immediately as water surged into the boiler rooms.

The Leopoldville shuddered violently as if in dying convulsions and the stern started to go down as the bow rose high out of the water. The ship's sound system that had been in almost

continuous operation faded. The lights went off. Frantic but pathetic last-minute attempts were made by soldiers to lower lifeboats, even trying in the darkness to hack heavy ropes with small penknives. There was confusion everywhere now as all order disappeared and it was every man for himself. As fast as they could reach the railing, men leaped into the sea to get away from the foundering ship. Many were lost when in their haste they forgot to remove their steel helmets. Others threw their heavy helmets before them into the water squarely on the heads of those in the teeming waters below. A number were trampled in the water when avalanche after avalanche of men clambered over the side of the boat. Some men held to the hope that the ship would last and rushed to the bow of the craft to escape the angry waves that were now surging over the aft deck.

In the water, men clustered together in small knots, clinging to one another, trying to get away from the suction of the sinking ship. Some pathetically screamed for help while others prayed aloud or frantically called for their mothers. Inexperienced swimmers desperately thrashed in the water until sheer exhaustion forced them to depend on their life preservers.

Then His Majesty's Transport Leopoldville began to sink. With a frightening hiss of escaping steam, the doomed vessel stood almost straight up in the water, stern down and bow up. Spotlights from rescue vessels revealed many Panthers still clinging to the disappearing bow as the Leopoldville, with a never-to-be-forgotten swish, sank into the dark waters of the English Channel. Momentarily the confusion in the water eased as men watched with awe the fearsome spectacle.

The big job of picking up survivors went ahead unabated. However, choppy waters and darkness made the work painfully slow. Many were forced to cling to rubber rafts or pieces of wreckage for more than an hour in the freezing waters before they were picked up. Some who drifted away had to wait even longer for rescue. Panthers were universal in their praise of the rescue crews.



First Sergeant Gilman P. Woods of Memphis was in his hammock below deck when the torpedo struck the Leopoldville. His clothing was so heavy with water after the ship went down that it took three coastguardsmen to haul him out of the sea.

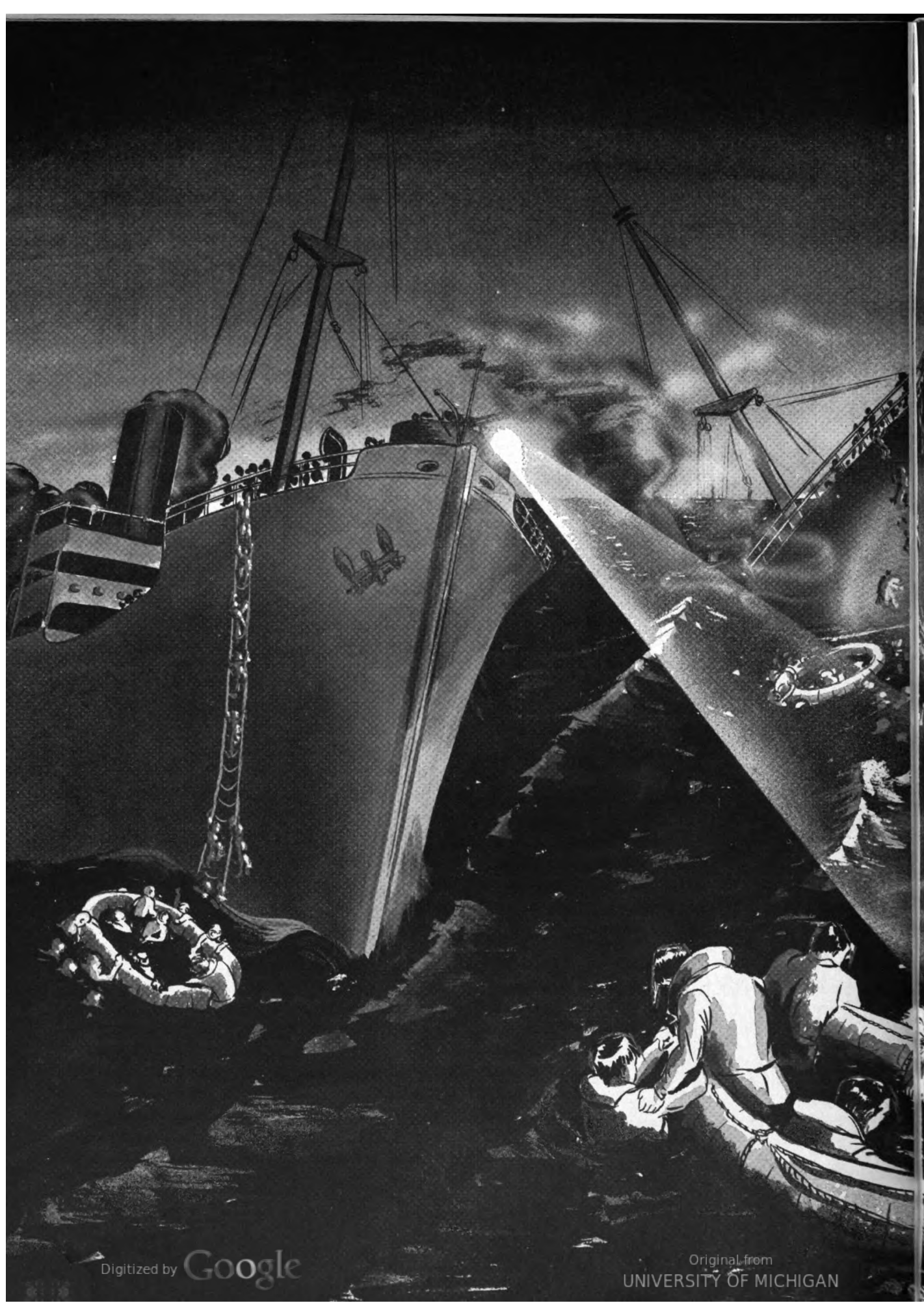
COLONEL MARTINDALE'S STORY

When Colonel Martindale went over the side of the boat into the water, here is how he described his experience:

"As the ship went down I was carried down in the water but swam back to the surface and came up in a mass of men. They were clinging to each other and I could hear Captain Gangwere's voice telling them to 'take it easy,' that seemed to calm them every time he said it.

"I caught hold of several bits of wreckage but they did not help. So, I started swimming towards the nearest light. This turned out to be a coast guard cutter. Many men were trying to get to her but she was too high out of the water. They couldn't even reach the hands of the sailors on deck. As she seemed to be drifting down on us I yelled to swim away and took off for another light. On the way I ran into a rubber raft. Right in the middle was a man who, from the sound and nature of his voice, was hysterical. I calmed him and finally got him to hold my hand while I pulled up on the raft.

"I finally was able to sit on the raft and to hold on to two other men who swam with me.





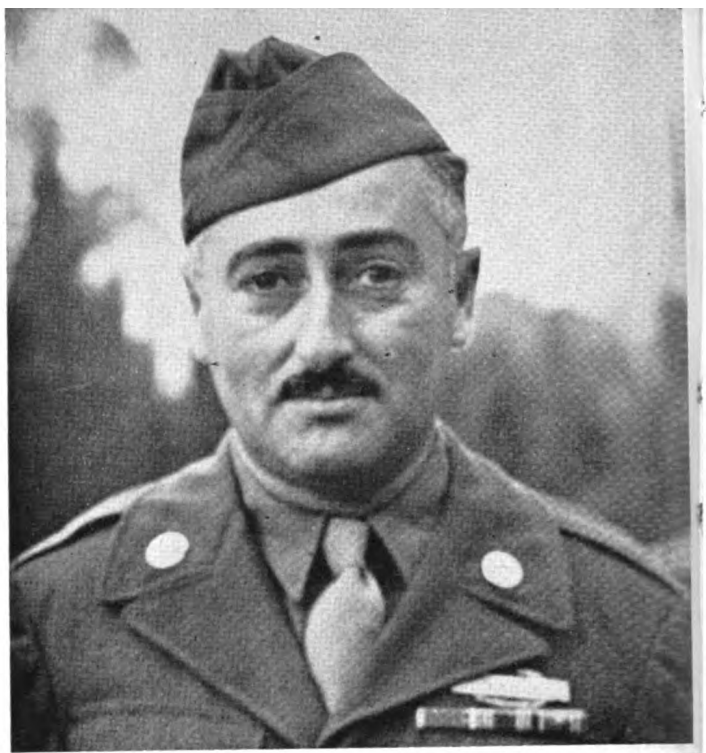
Soon a tug appeared out of the night so we dropped off the raft and swam for her. We got to the tug and sailors reached for the two men with me and I got hold of a rubber tire fender. By pulling up each time she rolled, I finally made the rail and was able to assist in getting more soldiers aboard. On the stern I found a man awash, just rolling back and forth. With the help of someone we picked him up and turned him over a pile of rope and I tried to give artificial respiration. It wasn't a very good job so a sailor took over.

"I asked if there was shelter and was directed to a cabin. I took four soldiers there and put them in the cabin, wrapped them in the blankets available and after getting a bit more sensible, decided to see what I could do.

"The next door was the engine room, I went in and found three or four soldiers. I sat down and then others were starting to be brought in. Two of my officers, Second Lieutenant Salmon and Captain Thorpe, were brought in, both stiff and starry eyed. They would grab hold of everything they touched. Salmon was piled in a corner and I found a blanket for him. Thorpe sat down on the deck and I found he had a gash in the back of his head. I tried to get him to lie down but he wouldn't do anything but hold onto a pipe that made a handrail for a companionway. Finally he would turn his head when I talked to him so I talked him into moving onto a grill where he would be out of the way and might be warmer. Then I went below as the tug started for Cherbourg. Everyone was getting as close as possible to anything that would be warm and also holding on as the tug was rolling violently."

Sgt. Daniel Rosenberg, Headquarters Company of the Second Battalion, 262nd Infantry Regiment, nearly lost his life in the English Channel. In his own words when the ship started to sink:

"All hell broke loose. Men were running, sliding, and jumping overboard from all directions. Stairways, posts, cables, and many other parts of the ship came hurtling through the air. Lifeboats and rafts which should have been lowered and manned by the now long absent crew



Sergeant Daniel Rosenberg of Rockaway Beach, New York, thought his last day had come when the Leopoldville began to go down. As he was about to dive off the sinking deck, his foot caught in the railing. His struggles to get loose were fruitless until a lurch of the ship freed him.

were still secured tightly to the fast sinking and utterly helpless liner.

"I tried to grasp the top rail but missed and my foot was caught underneath a roll of wire cable. I tried to pry myself loose but couldn't and it seemed as if the end had come for me. At that moment the part of the ship where I was caught lurched forward and my foot was released. I slid down the side but just before hitting water level reached for and grasped a piece of stairway still attached to the remains of the ship. I straightened up and jumped into the water as far away from the ship as I could manage. Most fortunately a wave carried me farther away from the wreckage and suction.

"All about me men were struggling to stay afloat. Some were screaming and yelling for help, some just waving their arms desperately, some grasped for pieces of wreckage, and some were swimming in the direction of the many rescue vessels scanning the waters with their searchlights for survivors.

"I attempted to get far away from the wreckage of the once proud liner. I was hit twice by pieces of debris but fortunately not too hard. I, too, was fervently hoping that one of the many boats feeling their way through the icy



Staff Sergeant Winford L. Budd of Youngstown, Ohio, was one of many awarded the Bronze Star Medal for heroism during the Leopoldville disaster. Budd voluntarily made numerous trips into the depths of the sinking ship's hold to rescue trapped men.

waters would spot me and come to the rescue but, though their flashlights flashed on me I was not seen. I knew then that I would have to conserve my energy and hope for a stroke of good fortune. It came in a short while.

"I saw a lifeboat close by and made for it. I was able to climb over the side. It was a cord bottom raft. We were tossing around in the open sea for about an hour when a searchlight from one of the craft settled on us. We held our breath as we waved frantically. Suddenly a voice came as if from heaven. 'Hold tight, we'll be with you in a minute,' it said. It pulled up close, tossed a rope to us and one by one we were hoisted onto the tug, stripped of our wet clothes, placed in bunks and wrapped in blankets. On reaching shore we were carried to waiting ambulances and hurried to the hospital."

A. T. PARKER'S STORY

This is Pfc. A. T. Parker's account of what happened that night. Parker was a member of C Company 264th Infantry. He was down in the hold when the torpedo struck.

"I don't know how long I had slept when a violent explosion threw me out of my hammock

to the table below. The instant I was awake I knew we had been hit by either a torpedo or a mine. I was sleeping next to our platoon sergeant, Sgt. Glanton. He called to all the men to be sure to get their life jackets. The men showed no signs of panic and started leaving the compartment in an orderly fashion even before the alarm to go on deck was sounded. About a minute after we were hit the lights went out but the blue lights marking the gangway continued to burn.

"After we reached the open deck an officer told us to keep moving so that any men left below would have room to get out. I climbed over some life rafts and reached the bow of the ship. Here I found Pfc. Chase, Malzeck, Coffee, Agnew and Babel, all men from my platoon. No one seemed excited and the ship, as far as we could tell, was not hurt bad.

"We stood around and talked, wondering whether we had hit a mine or had been torpedoed. We could see some lights off in the distance and someone said that it was Cherbourg that we saw.

"Later the Leopoldville was listing so far to the port side that it was impossible to stand on deck. Many of the men were going over the side into the water but no word had been given to abandon ship so most of the men stayed on board.

"We climbed up and sat down on the railing. Malzeck was on my left and on his left was Swanson, Sgt. Roy Craig and someone I didn't know. This boy I didn't know was crying because he didn't know how to swim but the fellows told him just to take it easy and his life jacket would hold him up.

"I decided to get rid of my ammo belt and steel helmet and since there were quite a few men in the water below me turned around and threw them on the deck behind me. When I started to take off the belt the water was at least 10 or 12 feet below me but by the time I had gotten rid of the belt and turned around the water was up to my feet. With all my strength I shoved off into the water and started swimming as hard as I could to get away from the suction of the sinking ship. I looked back once and the Leopoldville was standing on end with her bow

sticking up out of the water. I could see there were men still clinging on to her.

"After I hit the water I started to swim to a boat that was directly in front of me. When I came near this boat I saw the first and only panic of the entire sinking. Men were crying, some were praying, and some were calling for their mothers. Some of the fellows were so scared they didn't know what they were doing and would try to climb up on the shoulders of anyone around them. After being pushed under several times by some of these men I decided I had better get away from the crowd.

"I was able to slip around the front end of the boat. On the other side there was only a few men. I tried to swim to some ropes trailing over the side from this boat but the tide carried me away. Other boats were near by and I tried to reach them but the tide would carry me away from them. I soon found out it was no use to waste my strength swimming so I lay on my back.

"I don't know how long I was alone but finally I saw a group of men floating towards me. I didn't want to get in another bunch of men like that first group but in spite of this I seemed to float right to them.

"One of the fellows called, 'Hey, buddy, grab a rope and hang on.' It was then I saw they were grouped around a life raft. I got a rope and hung on.

"I don't know how long we held on to the raft but finally a tug passed a short distance from us and we all started yelling. The tug heard us and threw us a rope.

"The men were numb from the cold water so the tug crew had a hard time getting us on board as we couldn't seem to help ourselves get on board. After all the men from the raft were on board, the tug cruised around and picked up more survivors. This tug was a U. S. Army tug and the officer in charge told us he had picked us up right in the middle of an Allied mine field.

"On the way into Cherbourg the tug crew gave us hot coffee and cigarettes. When we reached Cherbourg, ambulances took us to the 280th Station Hospital.



Private First Class Allen T. Parker of North Vernon, Indiana, was thrown from his hammock when the missile struck the Leopoldville. Later he was picked up by a U. S. tug right in the middle of an Allied mine field.

"When I went back to my company I learned we had lost 40 men from our company. Babel and Coffee had managed to get on the destroyer. Chase, Malzeck, Swanson and the others that had been with me were drowned."

Another survivor of the sinking, First Sergeant C. P. Woods of B Company, 264th Infantry Regiment, described the scene aboard the Leopoldville when the destroyer Brilliant was alongside taking men off the stricken vessel.

"Some one started singing Christmas songs and everyone joined in. I think most of the boys were enjoying themselves—laughing—joking—singing—waiting for orders and watching the men jump to the destroyer. The sea was rough and both ships bounced around quite a bit. The men tried to time it so they jumped when the destroyer was coming up and toward the ship. Several men missed and went between the ships when they jumped at the wrong moment. A few of the first jumped with their steel helmets on and were hurt. The order was given to throw them away. This was taken too much to heart because soon the air was filled with them. It took a few minutes to get every one to just drop them on the deck.

"The crew, natives from the Belgian Congo, had gone wild from the start. I don't know what they spoke but it was anything but English. They were running around—jabbering—carrying suit cases full of clothes and doing absolutely nothing. They did get one lifeboat over the side for their own use.

"The signal lights had been going ever since we had been hit. Now tugs and crack boats came up and began playing spotlights all over us.

"The destroyer cast off saying they would be back but never returned. We later learned that its plates had been sprung and a hole punched in its bow while crashing against the Leopoldville.

"The ship was listing badly now. Once men started going over the side into the water. The captain of the tugs had given orders to come on down.

"Soon the ship began to settle by the stern so we threw our rope over and a couple of men started down. I was on the rail when my turn came but the water came rushing up the deck and near my feet so I dived head first off the rail.

"At the time I had on my overcoat, field jacket, wool undershirt, wool trousers, combat boots, my belt catch canteen and trench knife and a life jacket.

"Up until then I had always thought I was a good swimmer but I soon found that no matter where you wanted to go the waves made the final decision.

"Funny, that, about swimming. One boy in the company jumped overboard, swam to a tug, climbed aboard and helped the crew. I know he had never been able to swim a stroke before. Others, good swimmers, were lost.

"I swam away from the ship as fast as I could. I also wanted to get away from the crowd of men in the water. Some would grab onto anything near them making it hard to stay afloat.

"I tried to get on a life raft one of the tugs had dropped but again there were too many men. I finally found a hard hold as a rubber raft, enough room for one hand. We floated around a long time listening to the cries of men. Some prayed, some called for their mothers. And others just yelled.

"The main thought in my mind was: 'This



Private First Class Vaine C. Leady of Bowling Green, Ohio, was one of the last to abandon the sinking Leopoldville. By the time he left the ship for the murky channel waters, he was able to walk off the deck right into the sea.

can't be real—I'll wake in a moment and either be in a movie or this will all be a bad dream.'

"All this time the tugs and boats were floating through the men, picking up everyone they could grab. One finally came near us and we had to hold the raft away to keep from being crushed as both the raft and the tug went up and down on the waves. I was lucky and grabbed a line. I started pulling on it. I remember the awful feeling when it kept coming. There was about 10 yards of slack before it became tight. I finally had myself half way out of the water but couldn't get a grip on the line because my hands were cold.

"Up till now I hadn't felt the cold. Maybe it was because I had on so many clothes. I don't know, but as soon as I was partially out of the water where the wind could hit me, I froze.

"A couple of men grabbed me by the wrist and pulled me almost over the rail. A third one came along and heaved me over by the seat of my pants. The overcoat was soaked and weighed a ton or more. They rolled me over out of the way there on deck. And left me while they picked up others.

"I was very sick from the water and oil I had



Staff Sergeant Joseph C. Luhning of Texas City, Texas, was in charge of a compartment where the staircase was splintered by the exploding torpedo. By the time an emergency ladder was supplied, Luhning had the men calmed and in an orderly line, awaiting rescue.

drunk but was soon able to get up and stagger in to the boiler room. On top of the boiler were several other men; since it was dark I couldn't tell how many. I do know they raised an awful howl every time the door was opened and a finger of cold air came in."

PANTHERMEN SHOWED COURAGE

S/Sgt. Joseph C. Luhning, Company L, 262nd Infantry, gave this version of his personal experiences in the sinking:

"Suddenly at ten minutes to six, a terrific explosion rocked the entire vessel. No one knew exactly what had happened, but the water rising in the compartments, and the smell of gunpowder fumes gave us all a pretty good idea that the ship had been torpedoed. All of the lights were out, and there seemed to be a great many men massed at the entrance to the open deck. At the advice of some of us in the rear, the men lined up and calmly filed up to the top deck. It was a perfect example of discipline, and after the whole thing was over and I had time to think, I realized just how perfect it really was.

"When I got on deck, I met a man from my company who was helping the men out of the hold. He had no lifebelt and asked me to get one for him. I never did get back to him, since the decks were swarming with men, stretcher cases, and dead. I came upon a man who had

both of his legs broken, and even though it was extremely painful to this soldier to move him, four of us managed to get him to the ship's hospital.

"No one seemed to be thinking about the ship sinking. Everyone who could do anything to help, did so, and many lost their lives in the act.

"I glanced at my watch and noticed that it was eight o'clock, and even though a beautiful new moon was shining in the sky, a storm was approaching. The small tugs and cutters began to rock and shift dangerously and I noticed that our ship had started to list badly. Then at eight-twenty things took a turn for the worse, and the channel began to swallow the crippled ship.

"Everything happened so quickly after that, that I can't give a coherent picture of what took place those next dramatic minutes. I do know that the water washed me off the deck, and the next thing that I realized was that I was at the top floating around in the water. After being in the water for some time I saw a boat in front of me, but when I reached it, there was too big a crowd around it waiting to get pulled aboard. I did make the deck of another vessel, however, and after picking up as many other men as the small boat could hold, we headed for land and docked in Cherbourg.

"Just as a final word, let me say that it is hard to realize the splendid self-discipline, valor, and courage that the men of the 66th Division displayed during this course of events. They proved in every way that they were well-trained soldiers, men of which all Americans may well be proud."

All aboard the Leopoldville that night had similar stories to tell. Once on dry land, wounded and those suffering from exposure were taken to the 280th general hospital for treatment. Others were quartered by 12th Port Command. There they were given dry clothing and a huge Christmas dinner. Few, however, had any appetite.

Full extent of the tragedy was not known until casualty lists were compiled several weeks later. The loss: 14 officers and 784 enlisted men. First encounter with the enemy was costly for the 66th Division. We got our chance to even up the score later on.

Chapter V

Score Is Evened

When the 66th Division arrived at Cherbourg, we were about to take part in the most gigantic military operation the world had ever seen, the Battle for Europe, which for size and scope had no equal. It began at two o'clock the morning of June 6, 1944.

Under command of General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the American 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions as well as British airborne troops were dropped that historic morning into vital areas in the rear of German positions guarding the French coast from Cherbourg to Caen.

Aerial bombardment of this stretch of coastline, dubbed Omaha beach, began at 0314 and naval guns began to pour in volley after volley at 0550. By 0630, Germans behind miles of mined fields and strong concrete defenses saw the first Yanks assault Europe. Nazi guns covered all sections of the beach with murderous crossfires. Exits leading inland were blocked by antitank walls, ditches, mines and barbed wire. Large artillery and mortar forces were in reserve with every inch of ground on the beach zeroed in. Despite tremendous opposition, an American assault craft landed every 75 yards of the Yank 10,000-yard sector on H-Hour of D-Day. Resistance of the Germans was stubborn and American as well as British and Canadian casualties ran high.

German resistance, strong as it was, was substantially weakened by weeks of devastating bombing by the Allied forces. Three months before D-Day, air forces, while still hammering away at strategic targets, began to pave the way for invasion.

They destroyed key bridges and rail centers and raked enemy columns, virtually isolating the "invasion coast." As a result, the enemy's ability to bring up reserves and shift forces was hampered. D-Day was originally scheduled for June 5, but invasion was delayed at the last

moment for 24 hours because of inclement weather. Although on the 6th the weather was still rough, posing such problems as limiting air cover, General Eisenhower made the decision to go ahead.

Within a few hours after the original assault groups had hit the beach, they began to fan out and clear the way for reenforcements. By nightfall that first day, five American divisions, the 1st, 4th and 29th Infantry and 82nd and 101st Airborne with full equipment were put ashore while still others were afloat in an almost never-ending stream.

Second phase of invasion had two prime objectives: capture of Cherbourg and to build up enough materiel to enable a break-through from the beachheads. After bitter fighting, Cherbourg fell to the 4th, 9th and 79th Divisions. On July 5th, General Eisenhower summed up the situation in these words:

"The going is extremely tough, with three main causes responsible. The first of these, as always, is the fighting quality of the German soldier. The second is the nature of the country. Our whole attack has to fight its way out of very narrow bottlenecks flanked by marshes and against an enemy who has a double hedgerow and an intervening ditch almost every 50 yards as ready-made strong points. The third cause is the weather. Our air has been unable to operate at maximum efficiency and on top of this the rain and mud were so bad during my visit that I was reminded of Tunisian wintertime. It was almost impossible to locate artillery targets, although we have plenty of guns available. Even with clear weather it is extraordinarily difficult to point out a target that is an appropriate one for either air or artillery."

POCKET FORMED

Under cover of 1,500 heavy bombers and hundreds of other combat aircraft which dropped



Here was the 66th's chain of command. At the top was President Truman, Commander in Chief, then General Eisenhower, Supreme Commander of Allied Forces, and General Omar Bradley, Commander of 12th Army Group to which the Panther Division was assigned.

more than 3,390 tons of bombs on enemy positions, General Bradley on the 25th of July began his drive which resulted in the break-through at St. Lo and Avranches and swept the lines to the Meuse River. It was in this operation that Lt. Gen. Lesley J. McNair was killed. Taking advantage of the break-through at Avranches, General Patton's Third Army in a spectacular thrust drove towards Rennes and the Loire River, and by August 6 (four days after he started the drive) had completely cut off the Brittany peninsula. There he isolated the bulk of the German 2nd Parachute and 265th, 266th and 343rd Infantry Divisions. Remnants of these troops later fell to the 66th Division in St. Nazaire and Lorient. A week later, General Patton's armor swept north from LeMans around the southern flank of the German Normandy position while Canadian troops supplied the northern pincer, creating the Falaise pocket and trapping 100,000 Germans. Through desperate resistance, the escape corridor between the pincers was momentarily held open while thousands of Germans escaped to the north. But the Germans realized Normandy was lost and began withdrawing under heavy pressure beyond the Seine River.

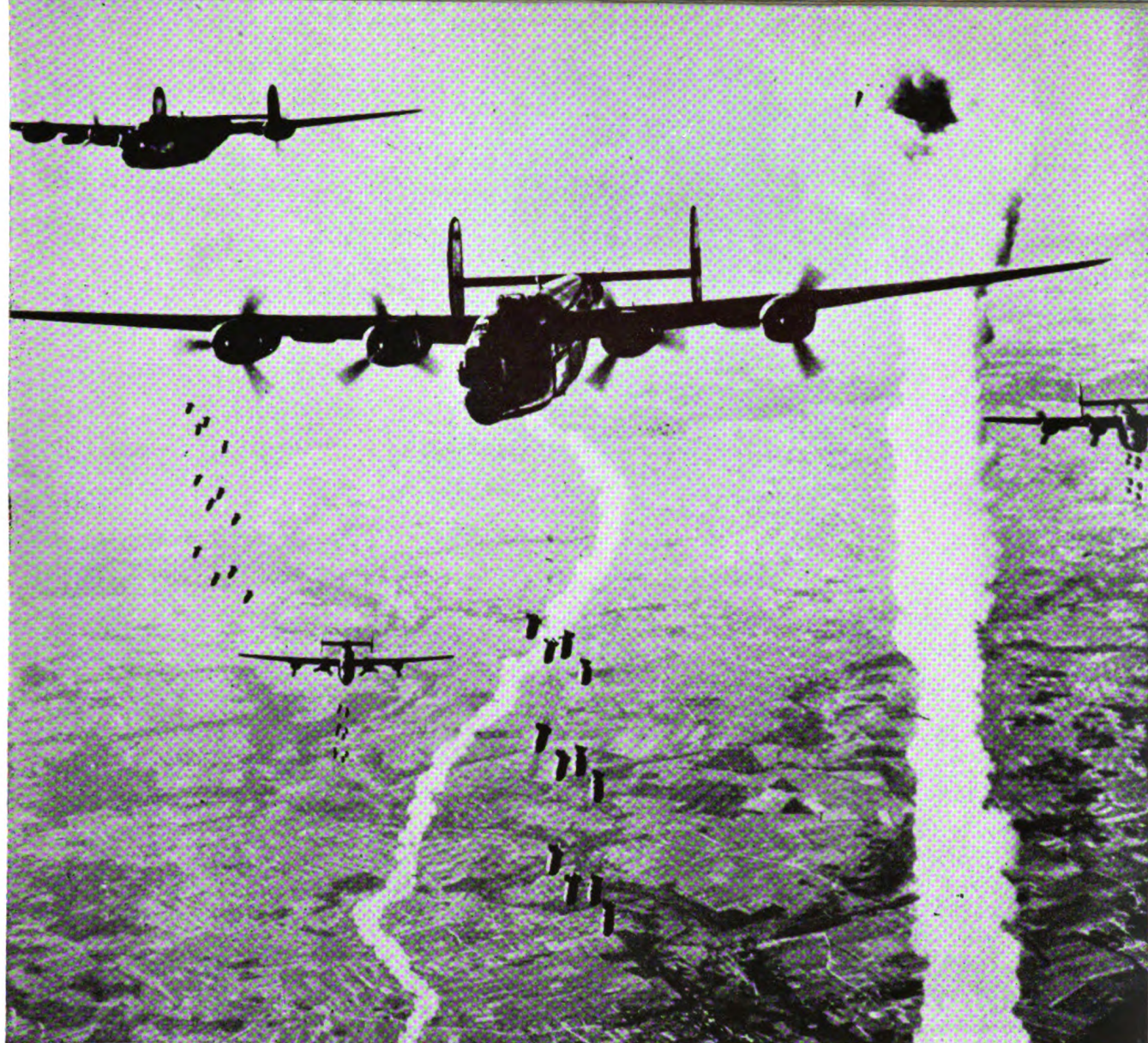
Meanwhile on August 15, Lt. Gen. Alex-

ander M. Patch's Seventh Army landed on the southern coast of France. With the aid of large air and naval forces, landings were made on the Riviera beach at Cannes where by August 28th, the beachheads were secure and advances up the Rhone River were well under way.

Marseille fell to the French First Army on September 1st. On August 25th, the 2nd French Armored Division of the First U. S. Army entered Paris as the Germans fell back north of the Seine and prepared to retire behind the Siegfried Line. Up to now they had suffered 400,000 casualties and had lost enormous stocks of equipment.

As the enemy withdrew he left behind several large garrisons to hold critical seaports to deny the Allies harbors needed to sustain the advancing armies. These ports included Brest, St. Nazaire, Lorient, Dieppe and Le Havre. These Germans expended vast amounts of labor and material to make these ports secure against Allied attack.

St. Nazaire and Lorient were given particular attention because they housed 17 submarine pens from which the Nazis planned to continue U-boat operations against Allied shipping. On September 5, the U. S. Ninth Army under Lt. Gen. William H. Simpson, began operations under the



Consolidated B-24 Liberators of the U. S. Air Force hit France as they soften the way for the infantry.

12th Army group, for reduction of Brest and other French ports. Dieppe fell on August 31st, Le Havre on September 7, and Brest, after fierce fighting, on September 19th. The battle for Brest was costly and when the port was secured, was too damaged to be of any use to the Allies.

After a look at the extensive defenses massed at St. Nazaire and Lorient, the Allies decided that reduction of the two ports would bleed too many troops from the principal effort against the main body of the Wehrmacht. Instead, it was decided to contain the Nazis until such a time as more troops could be spared.

Initially, Patton's 6th Armored Division chased

the Germans into the pockets. Men of the 83rd Infantry Division later went into the lines followed by the 94th Division. The 66th Division took over positions from the 94th January 1, 1945.

50,000 GERMANS

Filled with a bitter hatred for the enemy, the 66th plunged into battle with fury. This time we were on the giving as well as the receiving end. Units undamaged by the channel sinking, moved rapidly by truck and 40 and 8 to the Saint Jacques airport outside of Rennes where the Division reorganized and prepared for combat. There most of us got our first information of our

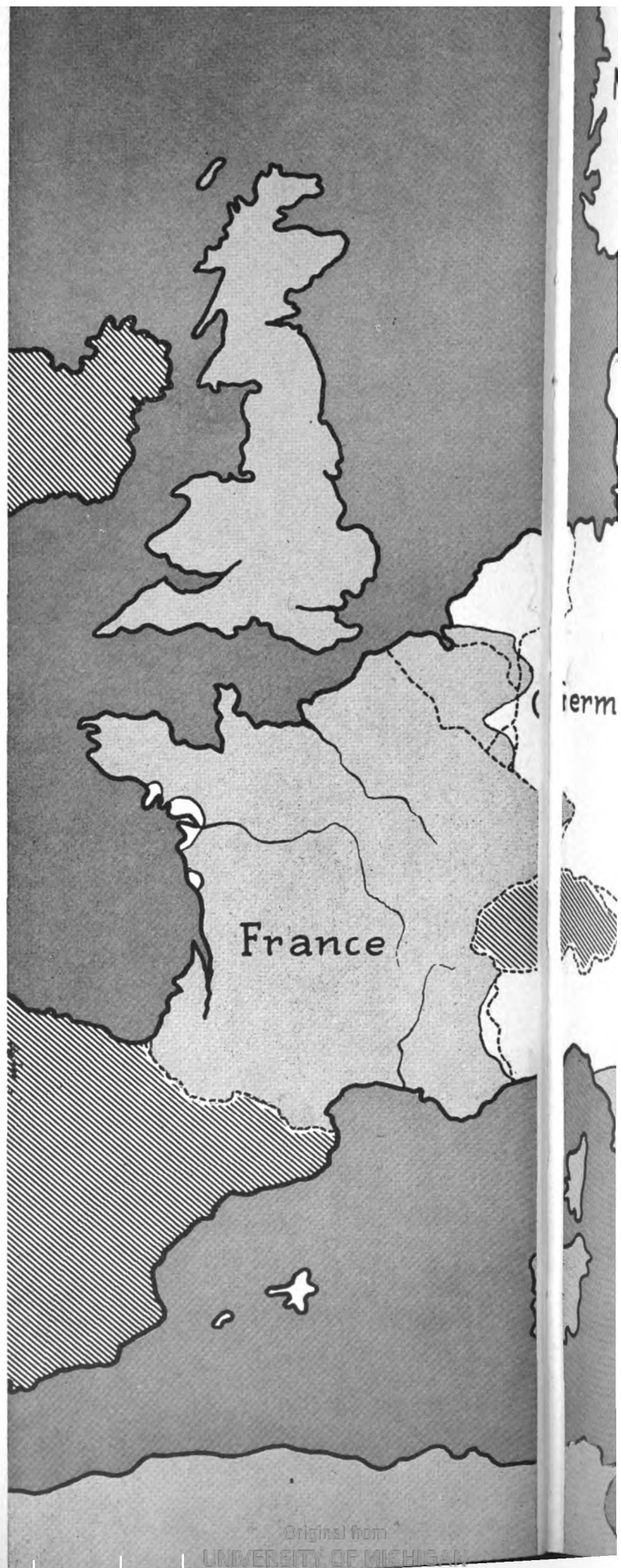
WAR AGAINST GERMANY

1 JANUARY 1945

The 66th Division entered combat just as Hitler attempted to cut Allied supply lines in a bold move which brought the Battle of the Bulge. The Germans committed their strategic reserves in the attack against thinly-held lines in the Ardennes. The attack was skillfully prepared and was favored by wooded terrain and poor visibility which kept U. S. air fighters grounded. Only heroic fighting by Yanks turned the tide. The Germans rained buzz-bombs on England and stepped up U-boat warfare to sever our supply lines. By this time Soviet forces had encircled Budapest and were driving toward Vienna.

KEY TO MAP

Allied territory	Black
German territory	White
Neutral territory	Checkered







In knee-deep snow, the green 66th Infantry crawled into the front lines against veterans of the German Wehrmacht. The damp chill of France's winter penetrated to the bone and the only hope to get really warm lay in an early spring.



initial assignment in the ETO. The 94th Division was moving up to the bulge and a few days after Christmas, the first Panthermen were in the line. The shift was completed by the turn of the year.

The general situation that met us looked like this: The Germans, 50,000 of them who managed to escape when the rest of Brittany fell, were barricaded behind formidable concrete and steel defenses in an area covering 856 square miles of French territory. They, along with some 30,000 more Germans holding pockets at LaRoche and near Bordeaux father to the south, comprised the last remnants of what was once a completely Nazi dominion.

The Germans facing the 66th were fighting from three bastions on the mainland and from two adjoining islands in the Atlantic. The largest pocket surrounded the city of St. Nazaire where some 28,000 Germans fought bitterly in the belief that tide of battle would eventually

change in their favor. The St. Nazaire pocket which spanned the mouth of the Loire River, controlled the gateway to the important French commercial city of Nantes. With hundreds of well-zeroed artillery pieces the Germans commanded by Brigadier General Werner Junck (later promoted to major general) announced they were in no mood to follow the example of many other ex-Wehrmachters who gave up when they heard their first shot fired in vain.

As they swept into the pocket, they seized vast quantities of foodstuffs and brought with them ample supplies of ammunition. Hastily they encircled with a liberal hand their fortress in a ring of mines. Flimsy underground bunkers were transformed into formidable reinforced concrete pillboxes.

The Germans had reasons other than self-preservation for a fanatical resistance at St. Nazaire. In the pocket were 14 submarine pens from which sailed forth U-boats the Germans hoped would smash the Allied supply lines. Long before D-Day the pens were lavishly supplied with such extensive defenses that even the air corps finally gave up bombing them. So much flak greeted pilots that St. Nazaire became known as "flak city." Earlier in the war British commandos tried a raid on St. Nazaire but were thrown back with huge losses.

Around the sub operations were built huge reserve stocks of foods and ammunition, enough to serve the force in St. Nazaire a long time. From a long range view the Germans pictured themselves returning to the Fatherland as heroes, even if the whole war did collapse, for holding out to the bitter end instead of capitulating. And there to see that there was no premature peace was General Junck, unapproachable and haughty commander of the pocket. The 49-year-old general was a pilot in World War I and later served

Right: The most hazardous job on the 66th Division's front was the combat patrol into enemy territory. Fighting in an area criss-crossed by hedgerows which made perfect concealment for German ambush squads, Panther patrols slashed deep into Kraut country to destroy installations and bring back prisoners. A Pantherman emerges from his dug-out on the double in the top picture as his sergeant calls the squad together for a daylight patrol.





Close-in fire support by all infantry weapons was vital to allow patrols to accomplish their missions and return. Above two anti-tankers watch with their 57-mm the base of a bridge at Hennebont where a German squad has just tried to ambush a 66th patrol. Mortar, machine gun and sniper fire were poured on Germans in support of Panther operations.



with the "100,000-man German army." In 1923 he went to South America and took an active part in the first plane crossing of the Andes mountains. After a hitch with the Bolivian army, he went back to Germany to reorganize the Luftwaffe, reaching the position of Inspector of Fighter Planes of the Reich. He flew in the Polish, Netherland and French campaigns and was in charge of fighter defense of western Europe. At the time of the break-through at Avranches, General Junck was CG of the 265th Infantry Division.

Farther to the north was the shell-battered desolate city of Lorient, once a mecca of world travelers but now reduced to a shambles. As the 66th spun its web of steel around the doomed city held by 22,000 Germans, few houses remained intact. The city had extensive waterfront facilities including three sub-pens. Commanding Lorient was Lt. Gen. Wilhelm Fahrmbacker, 57-year-old Bavaria-born artillery officer. Fahrmbacker was formerly commanding general of the German 25th Infantry Corps.

Approximately 9,200 civilians were trapped in the Lorient pocket along with their German im-



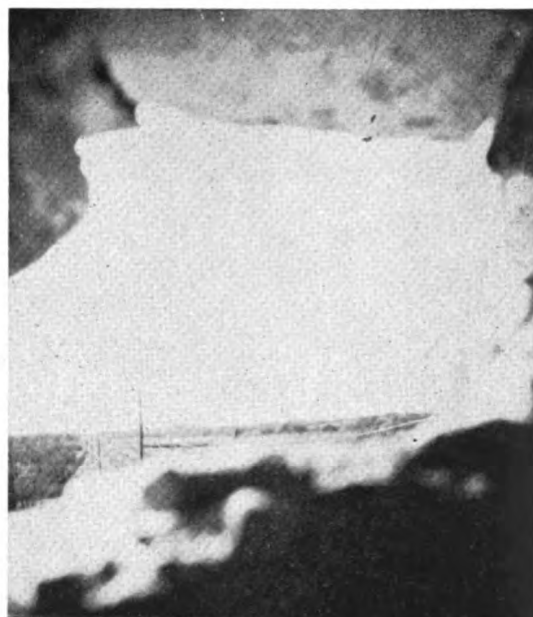
What the enemy lines looked like to a sniper is shown in the picture below, taken from an abandoned dwelling at the verge of American-held territory. At the top Sgt. William Rogers of El Paso launches a three-man assault boat on patrol. Lower right: a patrol leaves friendly territory.

prisoners who themselves were in turn imprisoned. All commercial life in the city was at a complete standstill. There were no shops or stores open. Long ago all civilian doctors had stopped practicing and only military law was in existence.

Between the two pockets was the Quiberon peninsula, long neck of land that jutted into the Atlantic, giving the Germans control over the entrance to Morbihan Gulf and water traffic to the city of Vannes. On Quiberon were 5,200 civilians. Its principle claim to distinction were the three 340-mm guns located at the base of the peninsula. The former French naval defense guns fired 700-pound shells a distance of 21 miles. Although they were never extensively employed, French in the area had a lot of respect for their capacity to inflict damage.

Big artillery guns on two islands farther out in the Atlantic gave additional security to the German position. The larger of the two, Belle Isle, effectively guarded entrances to both the St. Nazaire and Lorient pockets.

Civilian population on Belle Ile was slightly in excess of 3,000. Farther to the north was Ile





Patrols met with varying degrees of success. An infantryman of the 263rd Infantry was wounded so seriously that medics in the upper photo amputated his arm. One patrol brought back a German officer's uniform that was modeled by the Panthermen at the lower left. Another Pantherman found an abandoned German camera; developed the film and got the picture of the unknown man at the lower right.



de Groix on which were 500 cows, principal attraction for the Germans. Ile de Groix's poor soil and tiny size (7.5 by 3 kilometers) was hardly sufficient to support its 2,100 civilian population, let alone the 750 German troops garrisoned there.

THE ENEMY WAS SET FOR US

When Panthermen entered the line, it was still very much anybody's war and the Krauts had faith in their own arms. They knew their defenses were formidable so they settled down for a long siege. Immediately they started a project of troop training to make maximum use of every man. Naval and U-boat men without ships, coast artillery, naval artillery, minesweeper crews and service troops . . . all were converted into infantry. To provide leadership for the new doughboys, special officer candidate schools were set up.

Elaborate plans had been laid for maintaining contact with the homeland. Radio communications were in operation. There was even a telephone cable between the St. Nazaire and Lorient pockets which went undiscovered by the Allies until late in March. Airplanes made scheduled runs between the pockets with mail and supplies from Germany. So good was mail service that one German officer boasted he received his letters 18 hours after his wife in Wurtenburg wrote them. Planes which flew only at night generally parachuted their mail sacks into the pockets although on occasions they did land at the Escoublac airfield. Once the Germans even tried to bring a throat specialist from Germany to the pockets, but their attempt met with little success. The doctor tried to parachute to earth but the chute failed to open. The planes usually got fuel from the Jersey and Guernsey Islands (farther north) in exchange for food. Occasionally one of the commuting planes, a Heinkel III, fell into our lines, providing Lt. Col. E. M. Rowan, Division G-2, with lots of interesting reading.

The Germans took advantage of their marine position to employ boats for transportation. All in all, they had 42 small naval vessels of all descriptions including two magnetic minesweepers

Opposite Page: Many like Lt. Floyd Hopfensberger of Appleton, Wis., gave their lives for the United States and now lie in St. James cemetery, about 50 miles north of Rennes, France. Without thought of personal safety, Lieutenant Hopfensberger charged into a German machine gun.

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

FLOYD HOPFENSPIERGER
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and a dismantled aircraft carrier; two tankers and 14 non-naval craft, plus an assortment of whaling boats and private vessels requisitioned from various sources. At one time intelligence reports indicated as many as five U-boats in the pens. These craft were persistently reported to be in use between the pockets and Spain where they obtained supplies. Other reports claimed German-operated freighters met Spanish boats at rendezvous spots in the ocean to accept Spanish supplies for the pockets.

War manufacturing, although on a limited scale, went on in the pockets. In the sub bases, workers turned out 70-mm, 77-mm and 88-mm cannons mounted on pneumatic wheel mounts. They also built gasoline engines for use in electric power plants. Radios and sewing machines were taken from civilians and pressed into war service.

With their elaborate defenses completed, the Germans sat smugly behind their guns and defied

anybody to come within range. They had the added comforting thought that while their comrades on other fronts were taking a pounding, their position was relatively safe . . . but that was before the 66th arrived.

WE ACCEPTED THE CHALLENGE

Allied commander for the Atlantic wall battle was General Kramer, who was designated by General Omar Bradley, 12th Army Group Commander, as commander of the 12th Army Group Coastal Sector. Under General Kramer were also 30,000 French troops to whom he assigned positions alongside Panthermen on the 112-mile front around the Germans.

Panthermen crawled into foxholes facing no-man's land at the same time as did the cold and snow. January and February of '45 were arduous months for the division as the men fought not only the tough Germans but the weather as well. Panthers in the Lorient sector were com-



Nothing could seem as quiet as the front lines when the shooting temporarily stopped. Often there were long periods of time when there was only watchful-waiting for the next move. These photographs give a fairly accurate picture of the Panther front during a lull.





Lull periods were useful, too, to prepare booby traps for enemy patrols. Here a sergeant prepares a typical grenade with a control wire back to his dug-out. During the night if he hears a Kraut prowling around, he just yanks the cord and boom. The mess line at the right is about a mile behind the lines and considered a "rest" area

manded by Brigadier General Francis W. Rolins, division artillery commander. Brigadier General George J. Forester henceforth known as "beerbelly" from his telephone code name, commanded the St. Nazaire sector. To make up for the loss in the channel, two engineer battalions were assigned to the division and employed as infantry. In support, too, were a number of additional artillery battalions.

Although fighting on the coastal front was not on the same geographical scale as along the main effort in Germany, it was nevertheless equally as bitter and often much more treacherous and deadly. In the northern battles, the Krauts were on the run . . . they had plenty of room to retreat and didn't have much time to build formidable defenses. On the Panther front, the Germans fought under "hold or die" orders with their backs to the Atlantic. Long before the Panthers arrived on the scene, the Germans had secured their fronts with minefields, barbed wire, and clear fields of fire for all types of weapons. Everywhere we turned was the muzzle of a Heinie weapon. The terrain was criss-crossed

with hedgerows and ditches, making almost every square foot of land a German fort.

In the face of these odds, Panther Infantrymen took up the battle against a numerically superior enemy. If the Germans holed up in the pockets thought for a moment they had a haven in which to sweat out the war, they changed their minds when the 66th opened up. Vigorous attacks were instigated up and down the line by Panther infantrymen on patrol in no man's land. They picked a fight whenever they saw Germans, inflicting heavy casualties and destroying enemy installations.

General Kramer was proud of the performance of his troops and after one of his many inspection tours of the front he wrote in a special order of the day:

"I should like to take this opportunity to reassert my pride and confidence in the officers and men of the Division and its attached units. Our mission of caging up 50,000 battlewise and toughened Jerries in their Atlantic wall may not seem to be a spectacular or glamorous job, but neither is any tough job in war. We have an arduous mission here and you may be sure that history will record it as an important one in the defeat of Germany.



"Those of you on the front line are well aware now of the calibre of your opponent. He is the same fanatical, hard, and adroit fighter who stands with his back to the wall in other German strongholds and who will stay there until he is destroyed. You have been engaged now in combat as bitter and uncompromising as can be found on any battlefield, and you have proved your individual superiority.

"The magnificent spirit with which each one of you has endured hardships, and the courage and tenacity with which you have carried on has filled everyone with confidence and self-assurance. Some of you have seen your friends die. You have suffered wounds and pains. You have felt the miseries of cold and hunger and you have experienced the terror and drudgery of war.

"The success of our first combat assignment is not something that just happened. It is the result of long and hard months of training, of discipline in the ranks and confidence in yourselves. Our accomplishments bear proof that we

Two Panthermen thought they had a good place to put up for the night in an old barn (top photo) but changed their minds when a German 240-mm shell whistled in. The head of the shell is shown in the lower picture. Below Pvt. George S. Jordan of Detroit, just back from patrol into the rest area washes up.



are capable of any combat assignment. Here in France you have grown wise in the ways of war; you have outsmarted an enemy more experienced; you have won the admiration of our French Allies, and you have gained the abiding respect of your fellow-soldiers, your commanders and myself."



An old pot . . . just the thing to boil clothes.

Night and day Panthermen crawled from the shelter of their foxholes to attack the enemy and ferret out his front lines. Patrols varied in size and armament. Usually the men loaded themselves with automatic weapons and grenades, ideal weapons for hedgerow combat. Every clash infantrymen had with the desperate Germans is replete with tales of heroism, many of which will never be known other than by those on the patrol. A few of the experiences are printed here as typical of what every infantryman of the 66th experienced.

WE ATTACK

A triple-pronged dawn attack supported by light tanks in the St. Nazaire area inflicted heavy casualties and brought back many German prisoners. Although two tanks were lost in the mis-

sion, a series of enemy installations were destroyed as Panthermen fearlessly drove forward under murderous enemy artillery and small arms fire.

Hero of the action was Technical Sergeant George Chunfat who, single-handed, silenced an enemy bunker that threatened a large part of the attacking force. Sergeant Chunfat's squad entered enemy territory behind one of the attacking infantry-tank forces as reserves. As the tanks approached a bunker directly to Sergeant Chunfat's front, a flanking bunker opened fire. As the tank engaged the new target, a strongpoint to the front rattled with machine gun fire and threatened the entire attacking squad. Chunfat charged straight at the bunker, found the entrance and with phosphorous and high explosive grenades, silenced the gun. As he left the bunker,



There may be a little tattle-tale gray here but at least the "long-johns" are clean.

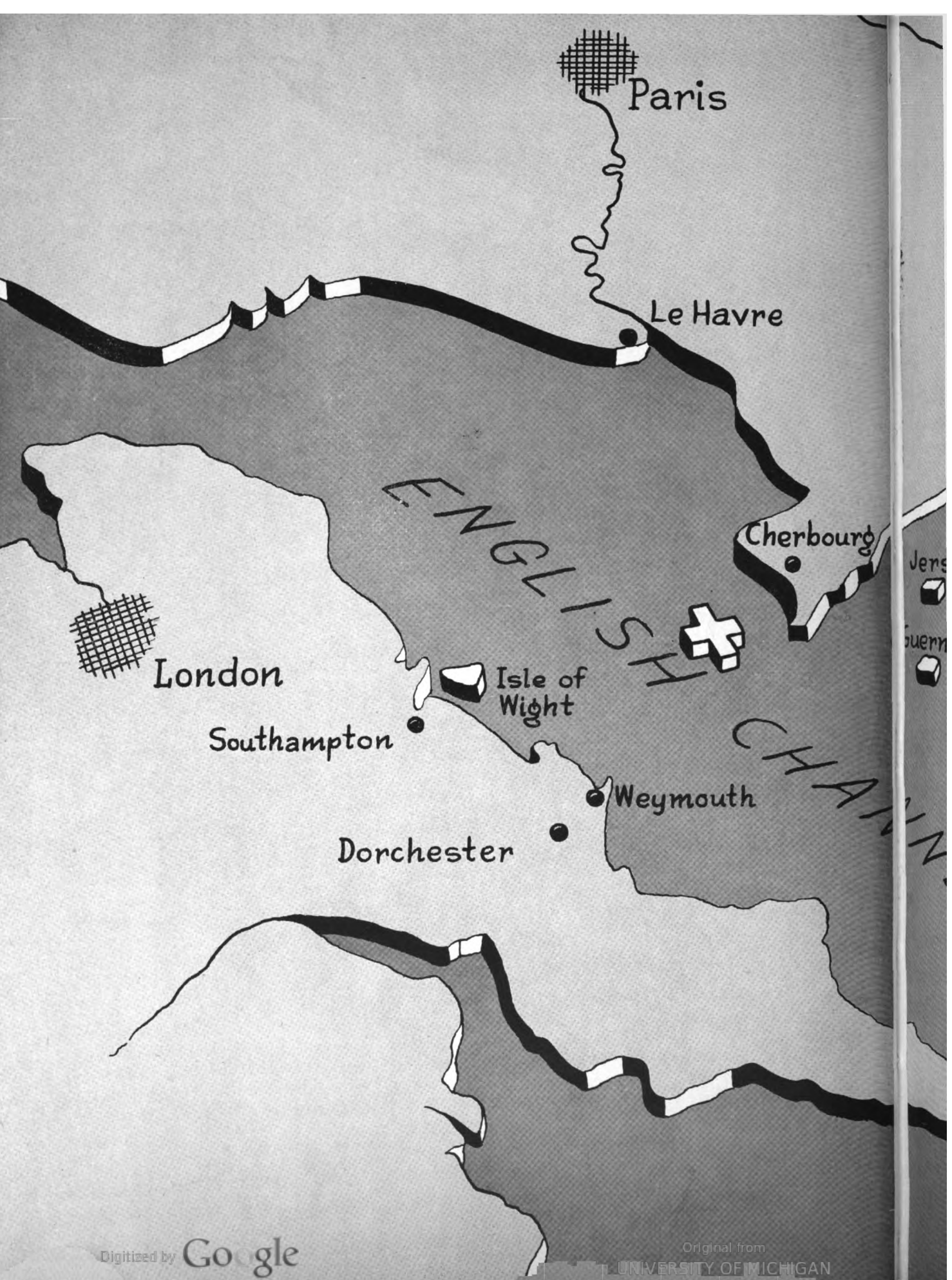
he spotted more Germans in a communication trench. They refused to surrender and Chunfat brought his greasegun into play. Sergeant Chunfat was credited with saving his entire patrol and enabling it to go forward and accomplish its mission.

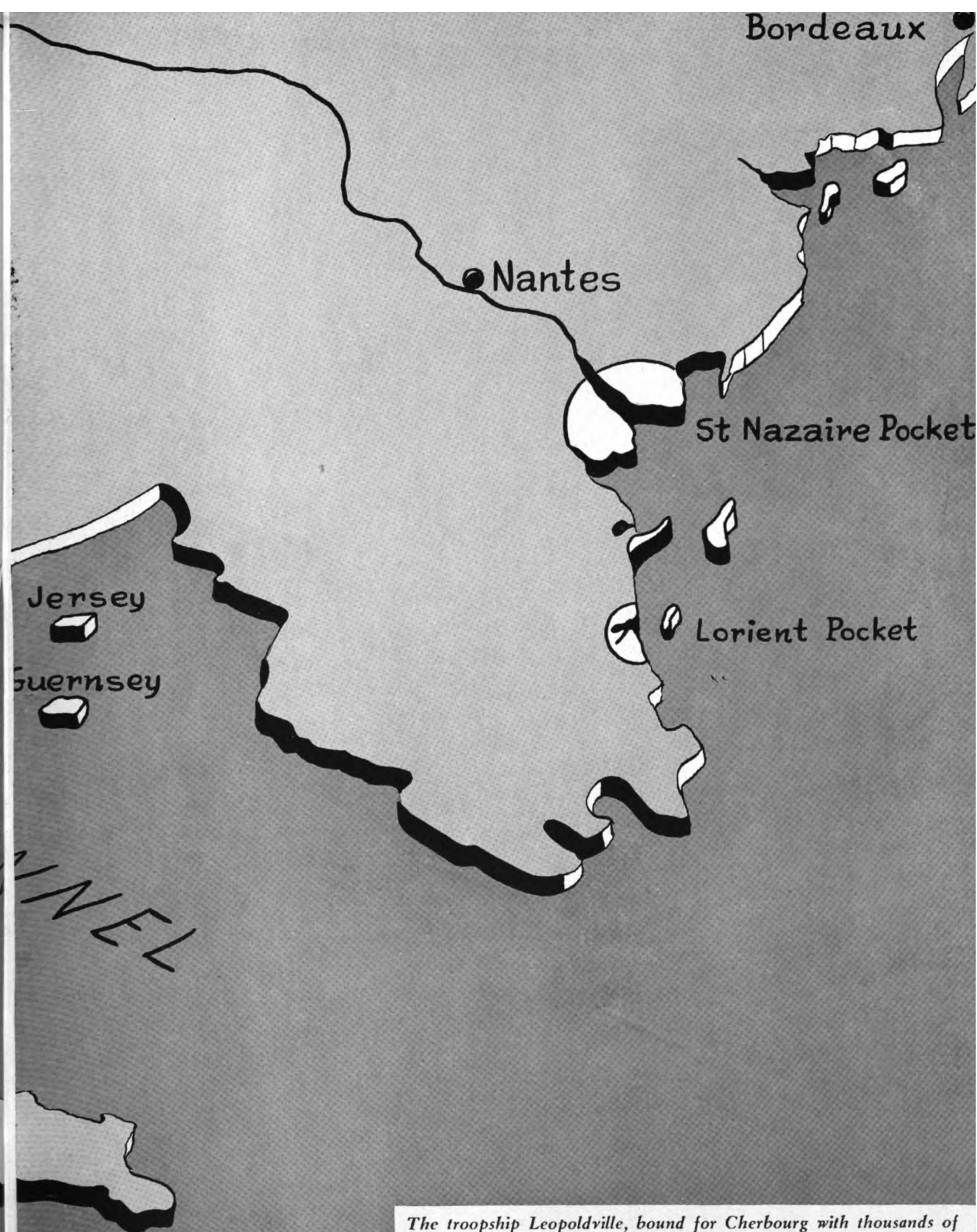
Panther medics proved their stuff under fire. Outstanding among them is Staff Sergeant Russell B. Schramm of Cincinnati. Startled by German 88's, Sergeant Schramm dove for the cover of a hedgerow. From his safe hole, Schramm heard the cry of three small French boys who were exposed in the shelled area. Without thought of personal safety, he left his cover to bring the children to safety. Just as he was pushing the last child over the hedgerow, a piece of shrapnel slashed across his face. His nose fractured and semi-conscious, Schramm with the

boys crawled back to safety. The French government awarded him the Croix de Guerre.

Another medic, T/5 Raoul V. Glaude of Lowell, Massachusetts, distinguished himself in action. When enemy artillery was concentrated on the group to which Glaude was assigned, he sprawled over a wounded soldier to protect him from further injury. Disregarding his own wounds, Glaude dragged and carried the wounded man to litter bearers stationed 150 yards to the rear.

On one Nazi raid, a 24-man patrol attacked the outpost where Pfc. Richard D. Parks, Syracuse N. Y., and three others were stationed, when the raiders called for surrender, Parks replied with successive bursts from his BAR. The gun jammed; Parks continued firing with two rifles until all ammunition was expended. Although wounded twice, he still refused to surrender and





The troopship Leopoldville, bound for Cherbourg with thousands of Panthermen aboard, cleared Southampton harbor early December 24, 1944. At 5:50 that night, the craft was torpedoed five miles off the coast of France. A cross on this perspective sketch marks the spot where the Leopoldville sank. Men of the 66th took an eye for an eye later when they defeated the Germans in combat at St. Nazaire and Lorient.



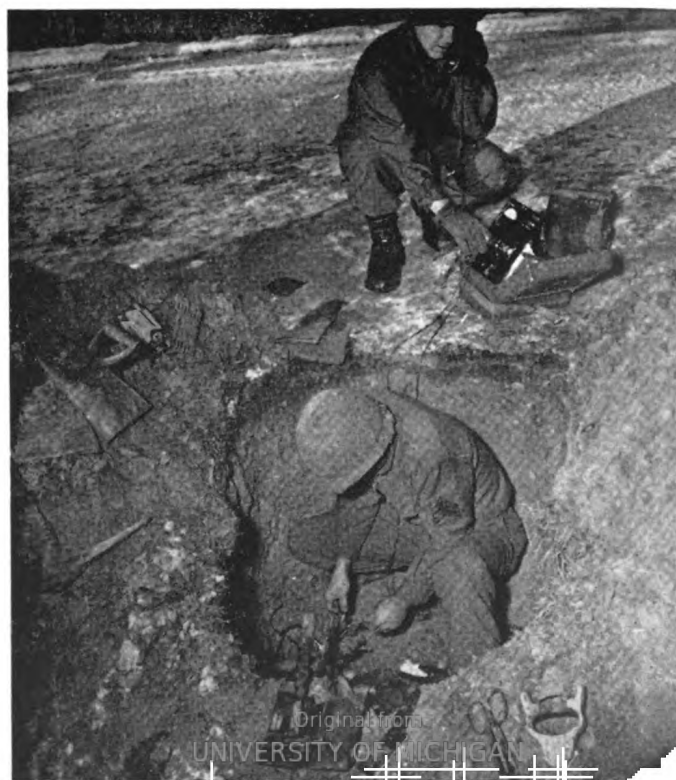
A 66th M-8 recon car prowls the front line city of Hennebont near Lorient for German patrols.



when the Germans swarmed over the position and took two of the men prisoners, he played possum. While the fourth Pantherman escaped, Parks lay quiet until the Germans withdrew to their own lines. Then, painfully, he made his way back to his unit.

Pfc. Elbert H. Nickells, Fresno, Calif., had a narrow escape. After relieved of guard duty, he was awakened by the cry, "Get up, they're attacking!" A grenade exploded nearby. Nickells ripped away a door, saw a second grenade roll in. He made a grab for it but missed. Luckily, it was a dud. Grabbing his BAR just as a mortar shell struck the doorway, he dashed outside through the smoke and dust. As he jumped over a hedge he confronted five of the enemy raiding party crouched in indecision. A sixth Jerry came over the hedge with his machine pistol ready for action. Nickells fired the BAR, then turned it on the rest of the enemy patrol. The Germans fled, leaving several wounded behind. Nickells, also wounded, received an Oak Leaf

A Heinkel III dropped near our lines provided a lot of information on the German garrisons. Below: signalmen uncover a live telephone cable leading through our lines to the Germans at St. Nazaire.





cluster to his Purple Heart, awarded for injuries sustained during the channel torpedoing, and a Silver Star for gallantry in action.

Time will mellow most memories of the exhaustion and miseries of combat but will only brighten memories like these.

Lt. Jacobs E. Brown of Dallas, Texas, isn't one to exaggerate the effect of the fire of his mortar squad. On a patrol into no man's land, he discovered a trio of Heinies behind a hedgerow and immediately called for fire.

Remarked the lieutenant: "I don't know if we got them but I saw three helmets fly up over the hedgerow when the shell landed."

Pfc. Thomas P. Gilburn of the Bronx, radio operator, will never complain again about the weight of the 45-pound wireless on his back.

A Heinie machine gunner drew a bead on Gilburn as he went over a hedgerow on patrol; squeezed the trigger. Bullets splattered all around the infantryman . . . smashed the radio but Gilburn got over the hedgerow with only a slight nick.

Another Heinie took a potshot at S/Sgt. John F. Murray of Brooklyn and what burned the infantryman up was that he couldn't shoot back. The bullet clipped the glasses off his nose.

And who said the Germans haven't got religion?

T/4 James Murray, a medic from Hagerstown, Md., out on patrol spotted a Kraut, apparently doubled up in pain. His rifle and two hand grenades were at his side.

Murray was about to give him first aid when he discovered he was in the wrong branch of service to be of much help. The Jerry was praying. He gave up like a lamb.

NAZI GENERAL LAUDS ARTILLERY

The other part of the Panther team, the artillery, carried out its mission with such perfection that even the German general commanding the Lorient pocket, after his surrender, had to admit that the gunners were exceedingly accu-

Panthermen in the Lorient sector will certainly recognize most of these road signs. The signs, especially the one announcing Auray, testify to the soldier's eye for a good target for some rifle or pistol practice along the road.

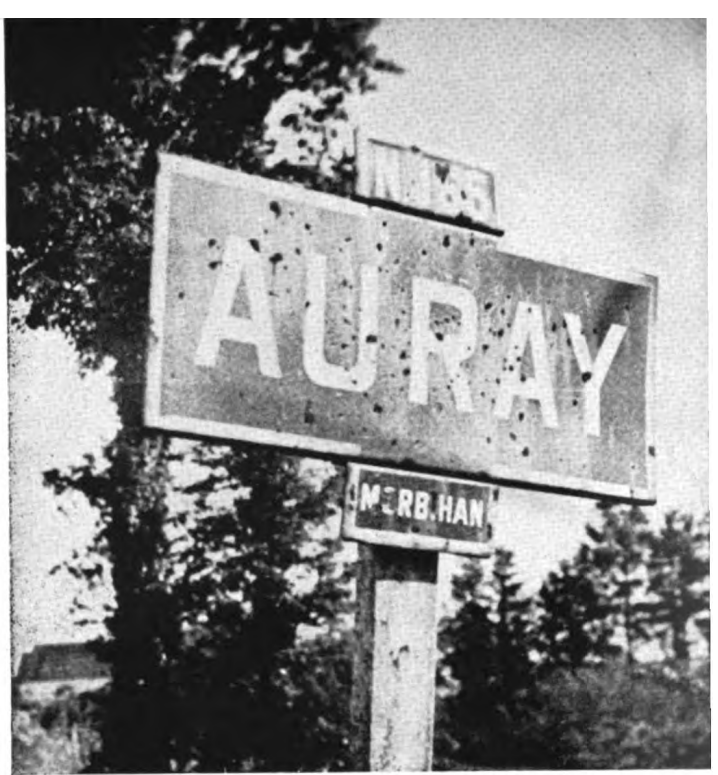
late. It was the artillery's constant hammering of German positions that made life unbearable, especially in the Lorient pocket and played a big role in forcing its surrender.

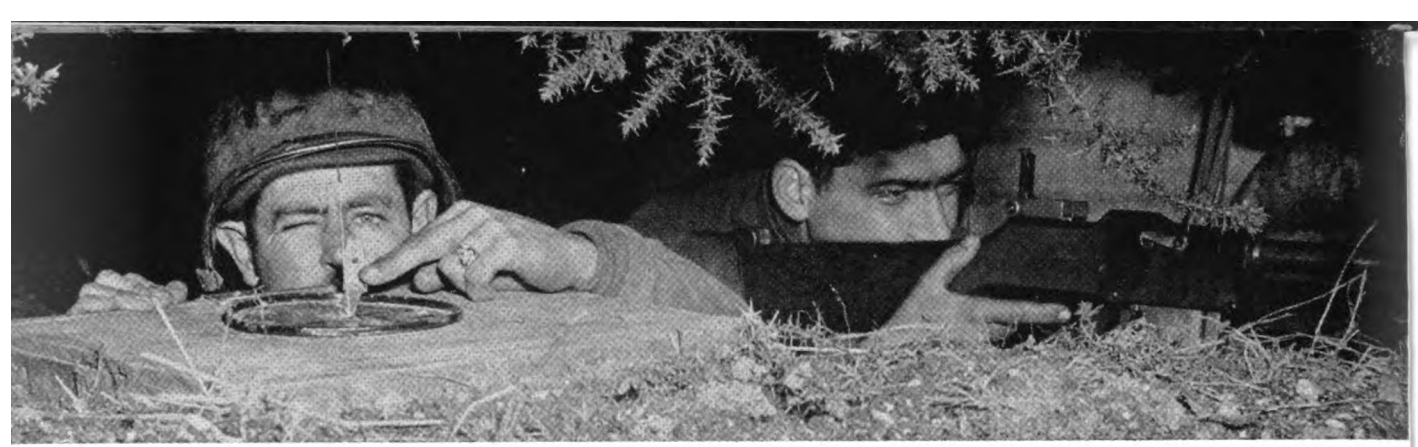
Statistically speaking, the Germans had every advantage. They had bigger guns and more of them. They had a number of 240-mm guns on railway mounts plus an assortment of artillery of all calibres they had massed long ago around the sub pens to protect their U-boat lairs. Their biggest guns, three 340's on Quiberon peninsula, were by far bigger than anything available to Panthermen. But despite all these advantages, the Germans came out on the short end of artillery duels and suffered heavy losses at the hands of 66th gunners whose exploits became legendary up and down the Atlantic pockets.

Panther artillerymen dueled it out with many German gun crews but perhaps the most extraordinary feat was performed in the Lorient sector when field artillery pieces were used effectively on coast artillery missions.

For some time artillerymen had looked longingly into the harbor of Lorient and watched the German boats nonchalantly plying their way to docks, unload and then move out again. They couldn't do much about it at first because of continual fogs that enveloped the harbor, lack of adequate OP's from which to direct fire and the excessive range. But those conditions didn't prevail long. Panthermen pushed forward and took new commanding ground for observation posts and more favorable gun positions. Warmer weather lifted the fogs in the harbor. Still conditions were far from ideal because of the extreme range. As a matter of fact, the Germans guessed their boats were completely out of range and continued ship movement in the harbor while they thought artillerymen would continue to look complacently on.

Shattering of the German illusion of security came one day when, directing artillery fire on ground emplacements from his Cub plane, Lt. Leonard Sink of Berrin Springs, Michigan, noticed another Nazi steamer plowing about the harbor. He didn't give it a second glance; it was nothing new; until he noticed the craft came closer than usual to 66th batteries.





Panthermen did all kinds of jobs during the Atlantic coast campaign. S/Sgt. Charles A. Scott of Kansas City found that an ordinary compass wouldn't work in a dugout because of too much metal around. He built his own non-magnetic compass from the base of an 81-mm mortar can and a hand grenade handle. His invention was widely adopted in the ETO and brought Scott the Bronze Star. T/4 Fred G. Thesing of Bellefont, Kans., and T/Sgt. Howard L. Crist of Findlay, Ohio, found out how to increase the 50-round drum of a 50 calibre to 200 rounds. At the lower right, two Panthermen have the most ticklish job of all . . . carting away a German 105 dud.

"What the heck," he mused as he wondered whether or not a shell would reach that far. "Think I'll give it a try."

Over the plane's radio he called down to Lt. J. T. Mack at the gun, briefed him on the situation and together they decided to take a whack at it, despite the extreme range. The first shell of the 155 howitzer landed near the ship and Lt. Sink began to adjust.

In the middle of the firing, enemy artillery spotted the gun battery and started counter-battery fire. That had to be silenced first and then the fire was shifted back to the ship. Fifty-nine rounds were fired in record time at the ship that was now trying its best to zigzag out of its precarious position. About half of the 59 struck the vessel. The 300-foot boat, full of holes, sank in 15 minutes.

A German barge in the harbor spotted the sinking ship and attempted salvage operations. All zeroed in and it took Panther artillerymen only a few minutes to sink it along with the crew.

What added a more dramatic note to the episode was the phrase Sink's commanding officer coined after the shooting was finished: "Sink sighted ship; Sink sank same." On the record it was just one boat less to bring in supplies to the besieged Germans.

After word got around about the first sinking, it became almost a contest among gun crews to seek out enemy craft. All in all, Panther artillery sank 14 vessels, carving an unprecedented niche in the history of field artillery shooting. Among other crafts sunk was a 1,250-ton turbine-driven mine layer; a 300-ton oil burner sub-chaser; a floating crane; 800-ton steam dredge;



an 800-ton steam barge plus a variety of other craft. T/Sgt. Robert McBride of Superior, Wis., aptly described the sinking of the 14th vessel in this message to division headquarters at Chateaubriant from General Rollins' headquarters at Lorient:

"The 14 ships sunk by Black Panther artillerymen attest to their accuracy, but the last victim was literally towed out for the gunners to work on.

"A tug was observed towing a heavy barge through the harbor and spotters called for artillery. As the guns were being registered in, the tug crew realized it was being fired upon, cut the barge adrift, and scurried for cover. Gunners promptly sank the abandoned vessel."

WE TOOK ON THE 340's

One prize our artillery really wanted to take a crack at was the 340-mm guns the Germans had on Quiberon. There were two reasons. First, the guns occasionally lobbed shells into defenseless French communities, killing civilians and causing extensive damage. Several times they fired into the city of Vannes (population 19,000) from a distance of 19 miles with amazing accuracy. Despite constantly changing climatic conditions and winds, the Germans once hurled three shots into Vannes that landed no farther than 200 yards apart. Any artilleryman will tell you that's some shooting. The three cannons belonged to the fourth battery of the German 264th Naval Artillery Battalion commanded by one Lieutenant (senior grade) Funk. The guns were a constant thorn in the sides of Panthermen and they struck terror in the hearts of the surrounding territory. The huge 700-pound shells sounded like boxcars when they rushed through the air. Second reason for the anxiety to knock out the guns was purely professional: to prove themselves better artillerymen than the Krauts.

The ill-equipped French fought as well as their inadequate materiel would permit. However, they lacked the training and discipline of Panthermen. A few miles from Chateaubriant the French erected a monument in commemoration of 27 French patriots who were executed on the spot by the Germans. The posts to which the French were tied are visible behind the monument.





German forces at St. Nazaire and Lorient controlled a number of important French commercial outlets to the Atlantic. The largest, Nantes, was not only blockaded at the mouth of the Loire River but the Germans before evacuating the city, sank over 150 boats in the harbor. One of the sunken hulls is at the upper left. Lower left: French crews under Yank direction drop 1,000-pound captured German bombs into the harbor to blast out the sunken boats. Only damage Nantes suffered from the war was from Allied air raids (upper right) and although little reconstruction was possible during the war, carnivals and amusement parks flourished.

After careful planning, the artillery duel with the 340's was set up. Biggest problem was getting our guns into position defilade within range of the 340's where they would be relatively safe from counter-battery fire. Our guns were moved into position under cover of darkness. Counter-battery artillery was set up to protect the 8-inch howitzers that were to do the actual firing. A





number of ground and aerial observation posts were set up to provide a check on hits.

Once the firing started, the roar of cannon and crash of shell was deafening. For an hour and a half our guns pounded the supposedly invincible 340's and finally succeeded in knocking them out. Sweating Panthermen were pretty proud that day.

Prouder still was General Kramer who on April 15th declared:

"On the occasion of the second anniversary of the 66th Infantry Division's activation I am pleased to announce that General Eisenhower, the Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Forces, has awarded the division a battle star for participation in the campaign of Northern France.

"Each member of the division is now privileged to wear a bronze service star on the European-African-Middle Eastern campaign ribbon. This star is the badge of recognition for a task well done. It places us among the ranks of

The fishing industry at Concorneau (above), north of the Lorient pocket, was stymied by the German forces, not because they controlled the harbor but because their guns dominated the lucrative fishing grounds around Belle Isle and Ile de Groix. The harbor at Auray (below) which depended on the Gulf du Morbiaan for an outlet was completely bottled up. When the 66th took the Nazi pockets, fishermen of Auray held a festival to toast the Allied armed forces and mark the opening of their first commercial fishing in five years.

battle-tested veterans of an Army that has never been defeated. Your first unit battle honor is well-merited and one which you can wear with pride.





Men of the 66th were spurred on to drive for defeat of the Nazis by scenes like this. Here is a truck load of bodies of Nazi prisoners in the notorious German concentration camp at Weimar. The bodies were about to be burned when Allied troops captured the camp and this signal corps picture was made.

"I extend anniversary greetings to each Panther. I congratulate you for accomplishments of the past two years, for tireless efforts during long months of training, for constant devotion to duty, your high state of discipline, and for your valiant feats in arms against the enemy."

Under the terrific and constant hammering by 66th Artillery, Lorient with its 22,000 German soldiers and 9,000 civilians gradually turned into a mass of rubble. Life became unbearable in the pocket. Most of the civilians as well as soldiers spent most of their time underground, coming out only when absolutely necessary.

Artillery shells completely paralyzed the water system in Lorient. First the pumping station was destroyed. And when the Germans tried to supply fresh water by means of the "Tanker Cascade" from Port Louis, the tanker was sunk.

Electric power lines were shattered. The only bakery in the city was completely destroyed, aggravating further the food shortage that intensified with the shelling.

A German prisoner of war provided our guns with all the data they needed in the way of time and place of a Kraut motion picture house in Lorient. The next night the movie, playing to a packed house, got no further than the opening scene when Allied shells came hurtling down on the audience, wrecking the theatre building and causing heavy casualties. Ammunition dumps were prize targets and many blew up with a violent eruption. Even General Fahrmbacher's quarters didn't escape damage. One night Panthers slammed 11,840 pounds of high explosives into the homes of General Fahrmbacher, General Kuze, the Luftwaffe general staff and Admiral Mathies, naval commander.



These prisoners were nearly dead from hunger at one of the largest Nazi concentration camps at Evansee, deep in the Austrian Alps. Many were starving and inmates were dying at the rate of 2,000 per week. The camp was reputedly used for "scientific" experiments.

By now, nothing dared move during daylight hours in Lorient. Artillery observers had the city broken down into sections with numbers for each critical point where they could bring down artillery concentrations by merely calling a number into the telephone to the gun battery. In only one spot were the Germans safe. That was in the sub pens where even the heaviest shells could do little more than nick the solid concrete. By now our artillery had wormed into enemy lines so they were even able to shell effectively German positions on Ile de Groix, six miles off the coast.

ARTILLERY OUTDID THEMSELVES

Heroism under fire was an everyday occurrence among 66th Division artillerymen.

A mobile artillery battery and German infantry, throwing everything but shell cases, failed to

distract Pvt. Cecil L. Kenner of Williamsport, Ind., from his job as artillery observer.

While German infantry fired on him with machine guns and rifles and a mobile battery shelled his area, Kenner crawled to a precarious position in full view of the enemy and directed artillery fire until the enemy battery was destroyed. For this feat he was awarded the Bronze Star Medal, as well as the Croix de Guerre by the French.

Big guns of the 66th were destroying a German observation post in the Lorient pocket when a telephone line from the 66th's artillery observer was severed by shell fire.

Leaving his observation post, Capt. Donald B. Van Evera of Hinton, Ia., crawled along the telephone line until he discovered the break. The infuriated Krauts rained vicious 88's on him, but Capt. Van Evera skillfully repaired the



Panthermen blast away at Germans in Lorient with 8-incher.



wire and returned to his post, enabling the big guns to destroy the enemy positions.

First Sgt. Vern T. Pritchard, a resident of Boone, Ia., was on duty at an artillery observation post when enemy shells severed his telephone communication with his battery. With intense enemy artillery fire falling 200 to 300 yards in the rear of his post, Pritchard grabbed a telephone and test clips and moved into the shelled area, crawling along the line until he discovered the break and repaired it while enemy shells drenched the area.

First Lt. John W. Hosford of Tallahassee, Fla., an artillery forward observer with two French patrols, was occupying a post in a tree 90 feet above the ground. He spotted two enemy patrols advancing toward friendly lines and accurately adjusted artillery fire on the enemy patrols, inflicting 30 casualties and causing a complete rout of the enemy.

Counterfire from German 88's penetrated his area and shell fragments ripped through the trees, but Hosford remained at his post until he discovered the enemy gun position. Hosford was awarded the Croix de Guerre by the French government and the Bronze Star Medal.

A French marine on a lookout post over Lorient spotted a German artillery battery. He wanted artillery. This is how he got it:

The marine phoned for fire from his post in a tree back to a French CP . . . who phoned it to another French CP . . . who phoned to the sector CP . . . where a French-speaking sergeant translated the data to the S-3 . . . who phoned it to the 66th Division artillery CP . . . who plotted it and phoned it to an artillery battalion CP . . . who phoned it to the battery . . . which fired the mission.

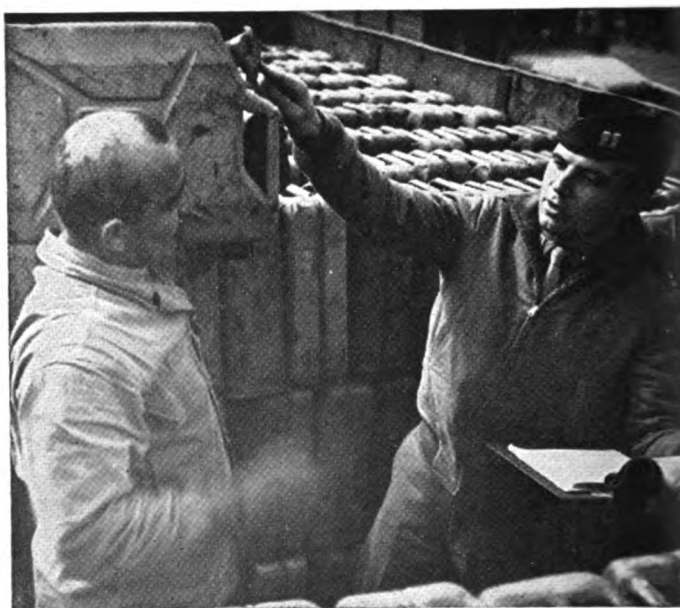
The observer didn't know where the battery was and vice versa. His adjustments on the fire had to travel over the French-American hook-up which stretched 75 miles.

Finally the marine shouted "parfait." The translator interpreted "target." The concentration whizzed over . . . the German battery was

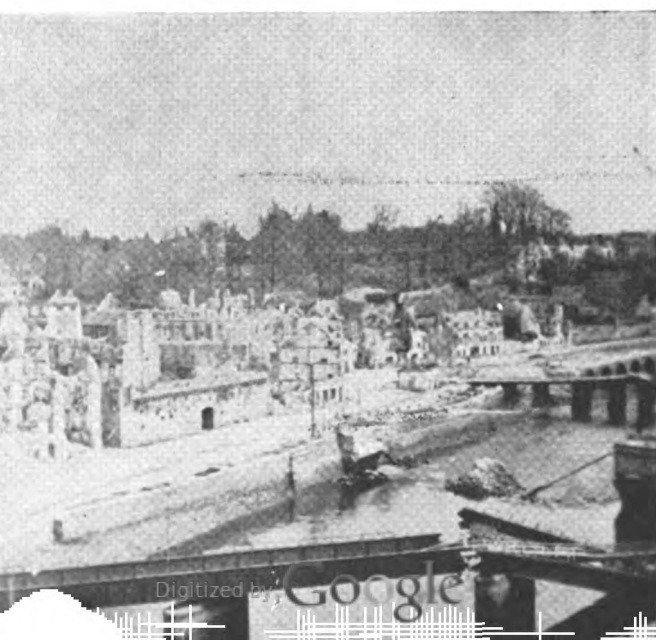


Typical dugout along the lines.

Below is Captain James P. McClain at the supply rail-head at Messac and one of the Russian workers.



At the left: Hennebont on the Lorient front was part no-man's land and partly occupied by French civilians. A high hill separated the two zones. At the center left is a pre-war picture of part of Hennebont. At the end of the war, the picture at the lower left was taken from almost the same place. Note the arched bridge is completely blown away and the buildings lining the river are demolished.



wiped out. All that remained was one horse with part of a caisson that deserted to the Allied lines.

A German company commander inside besieged Lorient lined his company up for inspection in



Backbone of close-in artillery support for infantry patrols were 105-mm gun crews like the one above in the St. Nazaire sector. Below a member of the famed 155-mm crew that sank the first German boat in Lorient harbor lights up while his gun cools off. Note the sinking vessel on the shield.





Artillery forward observers, clinging to trees or perched in old barn lofts, played a key role in destroying the enemy. Lt. John W. Hosford (below) climbed into a 90-foot tree to direct fire on an advancing enemy force and stayed there despite heavy counter-battery fire. Above two Panthermen, Corporal P. W. Skinner and Lieutenant F. W. Nigreen plot enemy positions from their lookout post in an abandoned house attic.





Above is a view of Chateaubriant, France, where Division headquarters was located.

what he thought was a safe spot way behind the lines . . . but not too far back for an alert 66th Division artillery spotter.

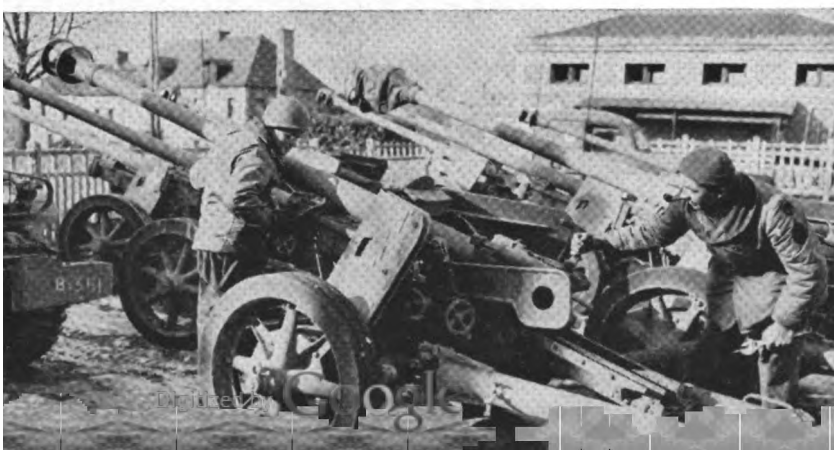
Just as the company was formed, artillery let loose with overhead bursts. The Jerries scamp-ered inside their barracks which were promptly set afire and burned down by Yank gunners.

Although Panthermen came out on top in the

struggle for the pockets, it was no snap. The Germans were good warriors and inflicted heavy casualties on our troops in defense of their spoils of conquest from the French. They were troops seasoned by years of successful conquest and they fought back bitterly. Only the dauntless courage and great sacrifice of Panthermen brought eventual victory to Allied arms.

Among the many Bronze Star winners among Panthermen for gallantry in action were these three artillerymen. Left to right: First Sergeant Vern T. Prichard, Private Cecil L. Kenner and Captain Donald Van Evera. Prichard and Van Evera voluntarily repaired communication lines under intense enemy artillery fire. Kenner's personal courage in re-maining in an exposed front line position despite a heavy German barrage to direct artillery fire, saving many lives, was an inspiration to all troops.





Everything along the front wasn't grim war. A Pantherman even had time to pose beside his shingle. In the left picture, two ingenious Panthermen devised a bathtub from a German airplane gas tank. At the right is Captain Harry Salsbury, historian sent from 15th Army to write after-action battle reports on the 66th.

Left: Two Panthermen repair 75-mm anti-tank guns captured from the Germans. The guns were turned over to French forces.

Chapter VI

Freedom for France

One of the major problems facing the 66th Division forces in the battle of the Atlantic wall were the French civilians imprisoned in the pockets with the German armies. As the 6th Armored Division which originally trapped the Germans swept towards the coast, French civilians, fearful of entering the zone of combat, fled along with the retreating Germans.

In the St. Nazaire pocket alone there were over 120,000 civilians crowded with 28,000 German soldiers into an area of 683 square miles. The Lorient pocket measuring only 101 square miles, had 9,200 French civilians.

As was typical of the Germans, civilians got what was left after the Wehrmacht took their choice of quarters and food stocks. In the early stages of the war the situation was not critical because the Germans had sufficient stocks of their own to feed the troops. But as the war dragged on and supplies decreased with little hope of replenishment, the continual military drain on civilian supplies was stepped up with a consequent cut in the civilian diet. It was to alleviate this condition that the International Red Cross at Geneva, Switzerland, requested the 66th Division to make arrangements for evacuation of a portion of the civilians from the St. Nazaire, Lorient and Quiberon pockets. The Red Cross asked that 12,000 civilians be evacuated from the St. Nazaire pocket alone.

To let 12,000 civilians out of the pocket may sound like a pretty easy job until one stops to think that between the civilians and the rest of France was a solid bank of artillery shells and small arms fire whizzing back and forth with deadly accuracy. Every inch of approximately a 1,000-yard band of territory between the two forces was under constant vigil of machine guns and cannons. Anything that moved drew a blaze of fire. Under the circumstances, the very task of

initially contacting the Germans was a difficult problem.

A TICKLISH JOB

A few kilometers north of the Loire River which runs from Nantes through the St. Nazaire pocket into the sea was a double track railway which lay adjacent to the river and crossed into German held territory through a sector of land held by French forces. In the immediate vicinity of no man's land, the double lane road ran straight as an arrow to the German lines and a person carefully peering down the tracks with binoculars could see very clearly German pillboxes on the other end.

Visibility, however, was just as good from the German side into our lines and anyone trying to cross the tracks even well behind the outposts drew immediate 88 fire from guns already registered in. The railroad tracks were, of course, a shambles from constant artillery and mortar fire. There were mines and trip wires all over the place.

Almost midway between the hostile lines was the railroad station for the small community of Cordemais. This railroad station, full of holes from gunfire, was to be the scene of important meetings. It was decided to make initial contact with the enemy at this point to bring about the evacuation asked by the Red Cross. The arrangement at best left a bad taste in the mouth of General Kramer. He'd bite hard into his ever-present cigar, bang his fist and declare he was there to fight the Krauts, not negotiate with them. The old man, a rough warrior but with a heart of gold, was no one to be around at times like that.

Captain Hochstetter, capable member of a military intelligence team, had the job of making initial contact for the 66th Division with the Germans. He had started the negotiations when the



Sometimes negotiations ran into a snag and then both sides grew serious as above. But not for long. The point was settled and the talks (lower photo) went smoothly ahead. In the center is German Hauptmann Mueller. At the right is American Captain Hochstetter. Note the handkerchief he has over his Black Panther shoulder patch. The covering has fallen and the 66th insignia is clearly visible. However, the Germans apparently knew we were the 66th Division even before we entered the line.



ON OPPOSITE PAGE: Ober Leutnant Rinker had never seen a sound motion picture camera so Captain Joe Birock (center) let him put the earphones on and talk German into the microphone directly to his front. Said Rinker: "Das ist wunderbar."

Hauptmann Mueller, representative of German General Junck, greets the 66th Division negotiating party with a curt "Heil Hitler".





Edward Angly of the Chicago Sun interviews Ober Leutnant Von Ribnitz, "public relations director" of the St. Nazaire pocket. Von Ribnitz is clutching a model III Contax camera. In the lower photo, Siinto S. Wessman checks evacuation details with Ober Leutnant Peter Rinker.



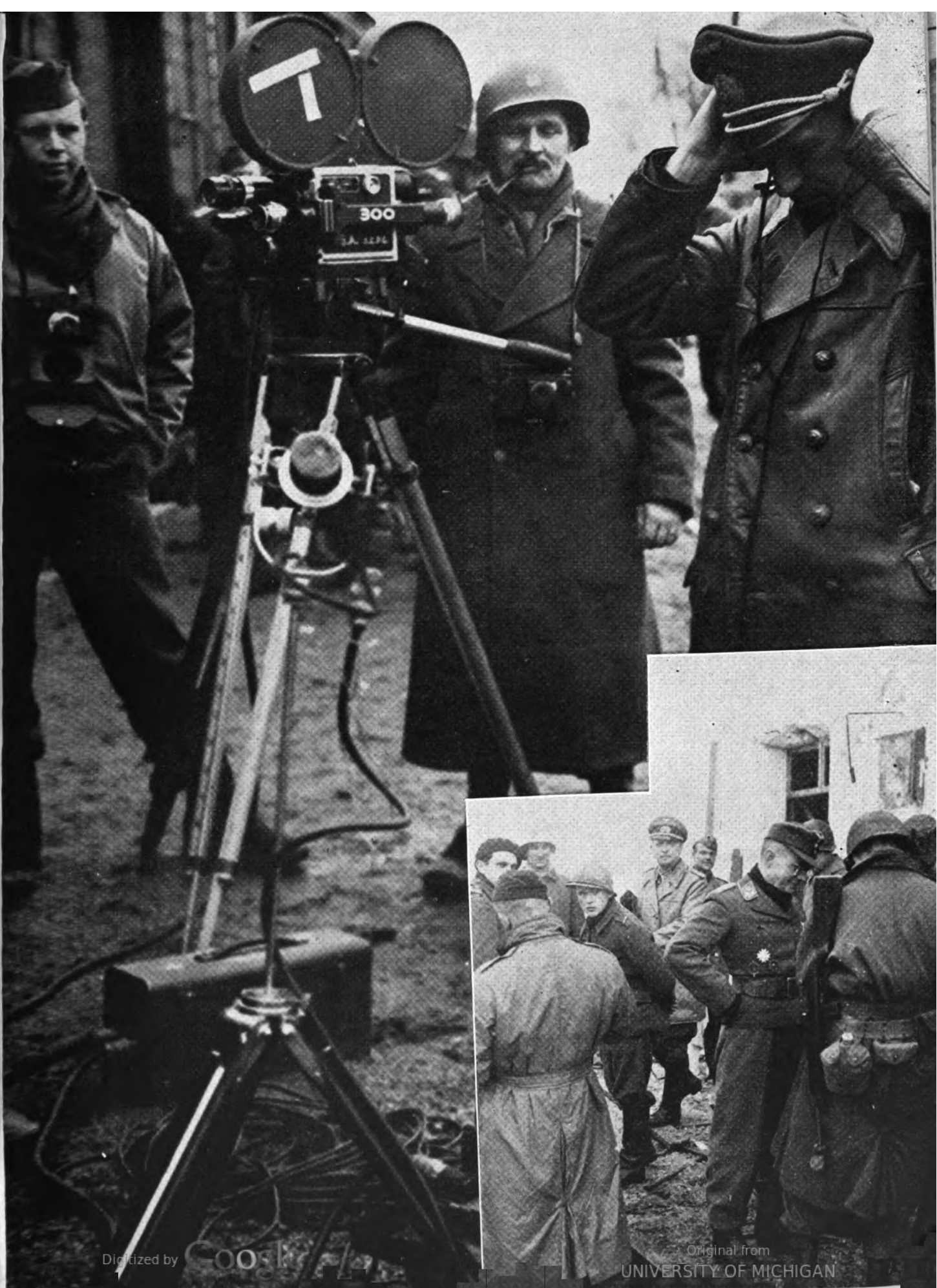
94th Division held the pocket but when the shift in forces occurred on the 1st of January, negotiations were temporarily dropped. Along with Captain Hochstetter was Major Charles McKew Parr, Jr., of G-2 section. It was a ticklish problem to let the trigger-happy Germans know they wanted to talk with them without getting their heads shot off.

When the negotiation party was ready to make contact with the Germans, fire along a two-kilometer front on our side of the lines was momentarily stopped. A big white flag was waved in clear view of the Germans with the flag waver keeping his fingers crossed that no eager Kraut artillery observer would call for a shell or two. Within 10 minutes a white flag appeared on the German side of the lines, way down the tracks. That was the signal for the negotiating party to act.

Not without a lot of misgivings, they stepped out on the railroad tracks, in clear view of enemy guns, hoping that the Germans respected the white flag of truce. They began slowly to pick their way through the minefields down the tracks towards the battered Cordemais railway station. Still no Germans appeared. As they reached the station they experienced a terribly naked feeling, exposed to fire from both flanks with nothing but a truce flag as protection. Just about that time, the flag looked pretty flimsy and thoughts of making a dive for the nearest ditch ran through their heads. Fears were allayed, however, with the appearance down the track of several figures approaching in smart German uniform . . . the German negotiating team, representatives of General Junck.

Preliminaries at succeeding meetings were by no means as difficult. Usually with the break-up of one session, dates were set for the following truce, hence eliminating partly the risk of walking out into no-man's land without assurance that the Germans knew there was a truce on.

Most of the sessions with the Germans at Cordemais were quite simple and usually followed a pretty definite pattern. Our first meetings with the enemy were stiff affairs and we were suspicious of their every move. The Germans on





Major Hellman



Ober Leutnant Schultz-Koehn



Ober Leutnant Peter Rinker

Three "regulars" with the Nazi negotiating committee were these German officers who apparently had no other function than stand around and carry on conversation. Jovial Major Hellman was commander of Battalion Hellman. He was former paratroop officer. Ober Leutnant Schultz-Koehn had only swing records on his mind while Ober Leutnant Rinker spent his time taking pictures with his Leica and talking about his wife back in Germany.

their part, however, displayed anything but a hostile attitude . . . as a matter of fact they made every overture to appear as friendly as possible. The worse the war news for them . . . the bolder their attempts to warm up to the Yanks.

There was two ways of looking at the evacuation of civilians from the pockets. One was the Red Cross way, i. e., removal of civilians from hostile territory where there was insufficient food. The other was the German way. The fewer mouths there were to feed, the more food for the military. Caught between the two extremes was the Panther Division. The Germans rather favored the evacuation even if they knew a lot of military information would come out of the pockets with the evacuees. On the other hand, they would eat better and longer, consequently their affability at the conferences.

Actually there was very little to discuss at the meetings as the evacuation arrangements were fairly simple. All discussions were in French. The Germans who had occupied France for four years spoke it fluently. We talked through interpreters. It was the little sidelights to the meetings that made them so interesting.

EVACUATION

The plan was to evacuate the civilians over the railroad track on which the negotiations were conducted. Two truces generally required to complete one evacuation, once arrangements had been completed. Truces, on a two-kilometer front on either side of the railroad tracks usually lasted from two to five hours. During the first truce period, French railroad workers repaired one set of rails of the double lane track destroyed by shellfire. Mines were temporarily removed and a train from the Allied side of the lines entered the pocket. Along with the train went the crew, an International Red Cross representative and three French Red Cross girls to attend the sick and aged. They were the only personnel ever allowed officially to enter the pocket.

The train stopped at the Cordemais station where the Allied guards got off and German soldiers got aboard. After a night in the pocket while evacuees were put aboard, the train returned through no-man's land the following day, the second day of truce. At Cordemais the same routine was repeated . . . German guards got off and Allied guards got on. A number of truces were held for evacuation of civilians from St. Nazaire and all followed essentially the



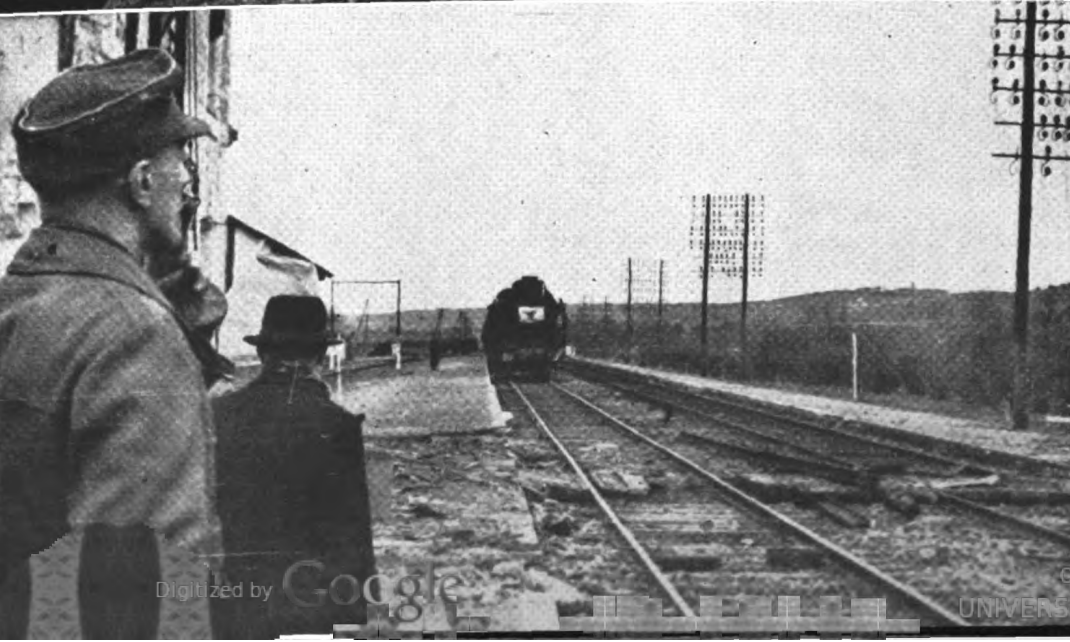
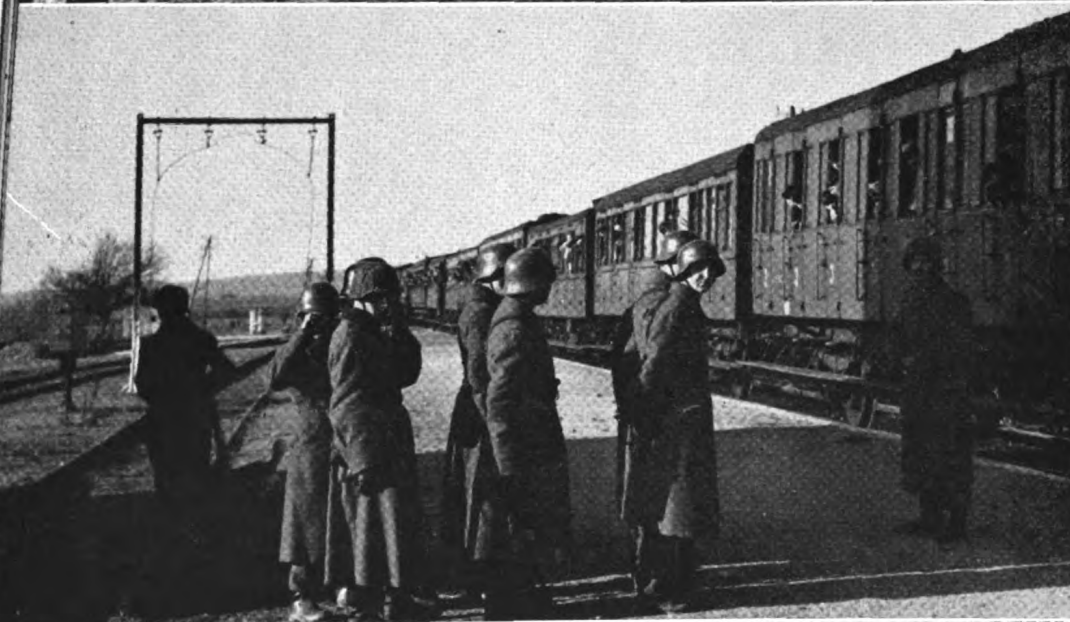
The smiling Mueller was generally the center of interest when correspondents were around. He rarely missed an opportunity to have his picture made. Part of the Cordemais railway station is in the background.

Both Ober Leutnant Rinker (left) and Von Ribnitz took a lot of pictures. Their results, however, weren't too good. Like the photo in the center, they say, would have been better if they had had proper chemicals.





Once evacuation terms were agreed upon, the shell-torn railroad leading into the German pocket had to be repaired to permit the train to enter the Nazi-held territory. At center is the German squad one of the War Correspondents drilled, much to the displeasure of the German general. In the lower picture the train flying a large Red Cross banner, is approaching the Corde-mais station with a load of refugees from the St. Nazaire pocket. In the distance can be seen the enemy lines where the Germans had strong fortifications.





Despite their bowing and smiling, the Germans never forgot they were at war. Often they violated the truce by foraging for wood in no-man's-land, like this Kraut soldier is doing. It was only after the 66th threatened to cut off all proceedings that the Germans made an effort to stop the practice.

same pattern. Before any of the evacuees were released, they were thoroughly quizzed by military intelligence teams for information and examined by medics for communicable diseases. Evacuees varied in age from babies to 80-year olds.

Meetings with the Germans gave us our first chance to see a genuine "Heil Hitler" and Nazi salutes which, we had to admit, were pretty showy. They had a definite pattern to their greeting which caught us unaware the first time before we learned to watch for it. The German officers, particularly the junior officers, walked up to within three feet of us, unexpectedly gave the Nazi salute with a "Heil Hitler" and then before we had a chance to do more than begin to raise our hand to return with a military salute, they grabbed our hand to give it a brief shake and then performed another Nazi salute.

One officer along with the party, Lt. James Bowns of the 167th Signal Photo Detachment, found himself returning with a Nazi salute before he realized what he was doing. We had no intentions of continuing the handshake, no matter how they persisted.

The enemy never gave up trying to find out what outfit we were although rumor had it they knew we were the 66th even before we entered the line. During the last negotiations meeting with the 94th Division concerning evacuation of civilians, so the story goes, the German officer in charge, as he was about to leave, declared: "I hope our relations with the 66th Division will be as pleasant as they have been with the 94th."

That was a bit disconcerting to us, especially after the extensive means taken both in the states and the ETO to hide our identity. Before entering the truce areas, we either tore patches off our shoulders or covered them up with a scarf or handkerchief. In the middle of the second meeting the handkerchief over the Black Panther Patch of one of the party slipped off and although the Germans didn't blink an eye, they all took a long look at it.

THE GERMAN PERFORMANCE

There's one piece of information we rarely missed the opportunity to pass on. That was about the Allied offensive into Germany. We

were generally pretty well equipped with copies of Stars and Stripes containing situation maps showing how our armor was slicing the Fatherland to pieces. They winced when we showed atrocity pictures and hastily disclaimed all knowledge of the hideous crimes their armies were perpetrating.

Particularly put-out by the atrocity facts confronting him was Ober Leutnant Lange, mild-mannered chaplain, who often accompanied the German delegation. Lange said he was a Protestant.

Another who wasn't too happy about the turn of events (more sorry that they were losing rather than that they had started the war) was Ober Leutnant Peter Rinker of 70 Olgastrasse, Wurttemberg, Germany. Rinker professed to be a "civilian at heart" and his

Below are three French Red Cross workers, the only persons admitted into the pocket along with the refugee trains. They are pictured in front of one of the shell-battered buildings of the Cordemaïs station.



Nancy B. Hogland of Orange, Georgia, American Red Cross worker, passes out cigarettes to French refugees just released from the German pocket by the 66th Division.

statemen was borne out by the lack of Prussian bearing about him that characterized others among the Nazis. Rinker wanted to talk about nothing but his wife and two kiddies back in Wurttemberg. Photography was admittedly his hobby and he came to all the meetings equipped with a beautiful German Leica that made our eyes pop. He took a lot of pictures (we took our share, too) and was pretty generous about distributing copies. Technically speaking, his results weren't too good. Rinker explained the chemical shortage was his principal difficulty in turning out good prints.

Ober Leutnant Von Reibnitz, German naval officer, had better results with his photography. Von Reibnitz paraded himself as the "public relations officer" of the St. Nazaire pocket. His camera was a Contax which was complete with a fortune in telescopic lenses. When asked if he was getting "much space" for General Junck in the Berlin newspapers, his only comment was



Four Panthermen, prisoners of the Germans in the Lorient pocket, are ferried across the river at Etel from the Nazi lines during a prisoner exchange. The four are in the far end of the boat. At the left is Colonel Keating who arranged the exchange for the 66th.



Two Americans who liked the way Hitler did things and joined his party, only to live to regret it, were Ober Leutnant Schmidt and Ober Leutnant Kohlhoff Luckenheimer. Leutnant Schmidt, left in the upper photo, was discovered during truce negotiations around the Lorient pocket. Still swaggering under his Nazi uniform, he reminisced about his home state . . . California. Luckenheimer, first seen during the evacuation of civilians around Pornic, was a marine engineer with Standard Oil until 1937. He came from Baltimore . . . 3307 Moller Street. He is standing in front of the German white flag of truce.



A tiny refugee from the St. Nazaire pocket waits patiently, cup in hand, for food from her Allied rescuers.





French children, imprisoned by the Germans on Quiberon peninsula, are on their way to new homes behind the American lines after their release by the 66th.





Above an aged French refugee gets first aid treatment in a make-shift hospital.

During one truce session, the train was delayed by 66th artillery which had plowed into a German railroad yard. During the wait, family pictures were compared. At the left is American Lt. Col. Kalische showing pictures of his wife to (left to right) Major Hellman, Ober Leutnant Lange (chaplain) and German Sergeant Marxen.



that newsprint was getting pretty scarce and "editors are cutting down on copy."

Von Reibnitz turned up later during a truce in the Lorient pocket and figured in a fast-shuffle deal after the Lorient pocket fell. When Pan-thermen marched into Lorient, Von Reibnitz was found near the U-boat pens. A Lorient G-2 officer had made arrangements to get his camera and lenses but an artillery officer beat him to it with a bribe of cigarettes.

Leader and spokesman for the German delegation was paunchy, smiling Captain Mueller, a 100 per cent Nazi. Mueller was a smooth, convincing talker and generally most apologetic. He outdid himself the time the Germans violated the truce by firing artillery kitty-corner across the area where all hostilities supposedly had ceased. That brought up the argument whether or not the truce area was third dimensional. Finally it was decided that firing over the area was in violation of the "spirit" of the truce.

Another time Mueller came into his own was when the Germans violated the truce by openly foraging for wood in the corridor where all military activity was supposedly at a standstill. As a matter of fact, the Germans sent horse-drawn carts within 25 yards of the Cordemais station for wood some French farmer had sawed and neatly stacked the year before. Mueller's an-foraging for wood in the corridor where all military act" but agreed to have it stopped after we threatened to call the whole thing off. No wood was worth that to the Germans.

He was pretty vain too and made a point of telling us there was a "doctor" in his name. Mueller was especially congenial when there were photographers or news writers around. Nothing he loved better than to have his picture taken. On one occasion he beamed for over half an hour as war correspondents, who came to witness the truce, snapped away.

Among the correspondents that day were Basil Cardew of the London Daily Express, O. E. Werner of the Associated Press, Edward Angly of the Chicago Sun, Arthur Farmer and Ronnie Read of Paramount News, H. J. Abrahams of



German Colonel Borst who repeatedly promised reprisals against his men if they surrendered talks with 66th Chief of Staff Keating during the Etel prisoner exchange. Borst tried to make it clear the Panther prisoners were treated well. An international representative of Red Cross is in the center.

International News Photos, and several movie men from French newsreel companies. All of them played a part in telling the world about exploits of the 66th Division.

Correspondent Abrahams on one occasion almost upset the entire truce proceedings when he approached a young German Lieutenant in charge of a squad of soldiers sent as train guards and asked if he might drill the men. The obliging lieutenant taught him a few commands. Abrahams took over and put the well-disciplined Germans through their paces. Later he remarked: "I bet I'm the first Jew to ever drill a German squad." The young lieutenant later said he got a "chewing" from his superiors.

CIGARETTES, CAMERAS, RECORDINGS

A lot of skull-duggery went on beneath the apparently calm surface of the truce meetings. While we gawked at their photo equipment, mouths of the Germans watered over our endless supply of cigarettes. Everybody on the Allied delegation smoked like mad, throwing away butts before they were half finished. The Germans had no cigarettes except a little ersatz tobacco

and only severe self-discipline prevented them from asking us for a smoke.

There was the matter of weapons, too. According to the book, personnel under a truce flag carry no arms. At first we didn't, but the Germans did so we started carrying side arms and carbines, too. The enemy made a great point out of bringing into prominence captured American weapons. As our armies were rapidly bringing the battle to a close, the Germans decided to abide by the book and left their weapons home. They grew acquiescent on other matters, too. Often the evacuee train would be late in emerging from the pocket, arriving at the Cordemais station midway point only a few scant minutes before the scheduled end of the truce. As if sensing our anxiety to get out of no-man's land before the shooting began, the Germans would offer: "Don't worry. We won't begin firing until you've had plenty of time to get back to your lines."

One German officer who carved a niche for himself at the truces was Ober Leutnant Schulz-Koehn. Round-faced, juvenilish Schulz-Koehn had only one interest in life . . . American jazz. He avidly described how he listened to American



Although the Loire River Valley, scene of operations for the 66th, was rich in foodstuffs, the area lacked adequate transportation to distribute food to the people. Many mass protests like the one above in Chateaubriant developed. The signs declare: "we want to work but we want to eat!" Below a meat shop clerk tacks up a sign: "Tomorrow Horsemeat."



swing on BBC (British Broadcasting Company) from London and AFN (Army Forces Network) from Paris. His prized possession was a notebook filled with a list of recordings he had of modern music. He spoke English fluently and was familiar with the names of most American orchestra leaders. Schulz-Koehn said he had no stomach for war and wished it was over so he could get back to his jive collection in Germany.

Schulz-Koehn, along with Captain Mueller, Ober Leutnant Rinker and a Major Wilhelm Hellman posed for numerous pictures for Allied cameramen. Major Hellman, incidentally, was formerly the ober burgemeister of Radolfzell, Germany, and had served in the Crete Campaign as a paratroop officer. He wore four decorations. Portraits of all four were published in the Paris edition of Stars and Stripes as typical of Germans fighting along the Atlantic Wall. A few days later Schulz-Koehn confided that the General raised the roof with him for permitting himself to be photographed. Asked how the general got a copy of Stars and Stripes, Schulz-Koehn just looked wise and remarked: "We have ways."

Not only was the 66th called upon to evacuate civilians from the pocket but we were also asked by the International Red Cross to ship in food to those remaining. At the same time we were asked to replenish French salt supplies from the salt fields within the St. Nazaire pockets, considered the largest producers of salt in France. Negotiations for this exchange were more difficult than merely the evacuation of civilians. Finally we permitted a trainload of foodstuffs to enter the pocket on the 15th of March in exchange for a trainload of salt five days later. Distribution of food inside the pocket was supervised by representatives of the International Red Cross. Evacuees coming out during succeeding truces assured us that none of the food went to the Germans.

TRAITORS

Similar truces were held along other sections of the 112-mile front of the 66th Division in compliance with urgent pleas of the Red Cross. South of the Loire River and along the Atlantic coast was the German-held city of Pornic where a truce for evacuation of civilians was held with unexpected results. As the evacuees streamed along the road leading out of the pocket (there was no railroad there) pushing their worldly belongings in front of them in small carts, the German lieutenant in charge spoke up in perfect English: "Well, they're all yours now."



Above a Pantherman, Pfc. Don Turgeon of Chicago, dickers with a typical French street vendor. Below General DeGaulle comes to Nantes to inspect French troops fighting under the 66th Division.



The 66th truce delegation, amazed at hearing a German officer speak English without a trace of accent, whirled around to see Ober Leutnant Kohlholl Luckenheimer. He lost no time in explaining his awkward situation. Luckenheimer was born in Boston and spent most of his life with his aunt and uncle, Mr. and Mrs. Luckenheimer, 3307 Moller Street, Baltimore, Md. He was employed as a marine engineer with the Standard Oil Company when in 1937 on a trip to Germany he met a fraulein. The two were married and Luckenheimer was persuaded that Germany was an up and coming nation. He joined the Nazi party and lived like a king on German conquest. He was assigned as marine engineer aboard a German destroyer. When his boat was shot from under him and he landed in the St. Nazaire pocket where he was promptly converted into infantry. That burned him up and he wasn't a bit backward about administering everyone from the German general on down a tongue lashing.

Philosophically enough, Luckenheimer summed up his position like this: "I guess I just picked the wrong team." He was eager to talk about the states and hoped some day to get back. We told him not to be too optimistic over that. "In

Baltimore," he was told, "they haven't much use for traitors."

The Division public relations office sent a "hometown" story on the lieutenant to his "hometown" papers in Baltimore. It ran: "Ober Leutnant Kohlholl Luckenheimer, nephew of Mr. and Mrs. Luckenheimer, 3307 Moller Street, Baltimore, is now serving with German Wehrmacht in St. Nazaire, etc., etc." Higher headquarters bucked the story back with a little note stating we'd better confine our efforts to publicizing Allied personnel.

Another man who betrayed his country was found during negotiations for evacuation of civilians from the Lorient pocket. He was Ober Leutnant Schmidt, a suave handsome fellow from California. He, too, once believed the Nazis were supermen but was gradually beginning to see the error of his ways.

Another truce for civilian evacuation was held at the foot of the Quiberon peninsula when 150 Frenchmen were taken off the narrow strip of German-held territory. The French version of the American March of Time produced a long movie of the evacuation which circulated widely in France.

Like the rest of France, Brittainy peninsula had its share of collaborationists who worked for the Germans during the occupation. Several hundred were imprisoned in a camp less than a mile from Panther Division headquarters in Chateaubriant. The right photo shows the woman's prison barracks. At the left five aged French traitors take a stroll in the prison yard.



Through contact with the Germans the Division was able to negotiate for the return of four Panthermen held prisoners. The men were exchanged rank for rank for four German PW's on April 11th at Etel city on the southern edge of the Lorient pocket near the Atlantic coast. All four repatriates said they were treated in a military manner, had no complaints even about food and said they were questioned only lightly. Exchanged at that time were T/5 Roy Lee and Privates William E. White, John D. Paavola and Kenneth Irvin. The 94th Division similarly had a prisoner exchange with the Germans. To obtain the release of an American air force major with a certain number of decorations, they had to offer a similar one in exchange. Finally one was found in a PW cage in England and shipped to the Lorient front. The German made such a fuss over being moved out of his PW cage (where under Geneva rules he wasn't required to work) and back into combat that when the German authorities in Lorient heard about it, he was court-martialed for cowardice and executed.

The truces, however, formed only a small part of Panther contact with the enemy. Principal contact was on the field of battle where beguiling ways had no merit and ability as a soldier was the deciding factor. Nevertheless, their uniqueness brought wide attention to the 66th Division, most of it favorable because of our humanitarian actions in alleviating suffering among civilians. Some irresponsible writers with a passion for headlines wrote into the evacuations more than actually existed. They interpreted the truces with catch phrases like "phony war" and "zany front." Those who made much ado about the truces never came around to look at our "shooting war." The rumble of cannon fire never reached their warm Paris hotel rooms from which vantage point they simply weren't qualified to write about war they had never seen.



A familiar face to all Panthermen is this French peasant woman, typical of farmers on the Brittany peninsula. Panthermen were also familiar with the product of the gadget in the lower picture, if not with the apparatus itself. It's a calvados still.





Whatever else France lacked, veterans of World War II join those of World War I in universal applause of the French mademoiselle. Whether it was on the Champs Elysee in Paris or on the beach at the Riviera, the chicue mam'selles caught the eyes of Panthermen as they flitted by on their wooden-soled wedgies, leaving a wake of perfume, or pedaled their bicycles with skirts billowing in the breeze. Typical is Marie Cecile of Paris. AH OUI!

Chapter VII

Vive L' Amerique

Disintegration of German forces opposing the 66th Division became apparent by mid-April as the tempo of artillery bombardment and infantry attacks on the 50,000 besieged Nazis increased. All along the line in all sectors, infantrymen made savage thrusts into enemy positions while resistance continued to crumble. Artillery, especially in the Lorient sector, cascaded tons of shells into every nook and corner where the Germans sought refuge. The further they burrowed into the ground, the heavier the shells that dug them out. Under the incessant hammering, reports began to trickle in to our headquarters about discontent, mutiny and hunger among the enemy. This only spurred our efforts.

It was difficult to discern the total casualties our forces inflicted on the enemy. A prisoner of war stated that published reports in the Lorient pocket alone fixed the casualties at 3,560 but the figure probably represented about half the true number. German officers, to bolster the morale of their men, told them that the U-boats had inflicted 5,000 to 6,000 casualties on the 66th Division.

Despondence grew in the pockets not only over the shellacking the Wehrmacht was taking on other fronts but over the more immediate problem of a growing food shortage. For well over a half a year they had been living on stored reserves. Their unbalanced diet began to tell in increased sickness. In St. Nazaire a mild epidemic of boils was reported. Malnutrition was reported late in April in the penal units where the diet was the least sufficient. Germans increased their demands on civilians for food, further straining already aggravated relations.

Sensing victory, civilians began to balk at turning over food to Germans so the Nazis started offering payment. Pay deductions of 100 francs every 10 days were made from soldiers to help pay for food. The soldiers were getting

only their combat bonus at the time and not a franc of their base pay.

By this time Lorient was completely out of food and was totally dependent on St. Nazaire for supplies. Only food remaining in Lorient in any sizable quantity was flour and it was all moved into the sub-pens for safekeeping. The bakery in Lorient experienced only sporadic operation at best. Panther artillerymen knew exactly where it was. Several times the general staff at Lorient recommended reducing the already skimpy ration of soldiers but officers of the medical corps warned against it on grounds the men could stand no further cut and still be fit for combat.

Once Allied artillery had swept German shipping completely out of the Lorient harbor, only available crafts to bring in supplies from St. Nazaire were submarines. Typical load they brought back to Lorient was 150 sacks of flour, ammunition, quantities of smoked pork, butter and cigarettes. By this time submarine movements to Spain for supplies had stopped. Meat, formerly obtained from Ile de Groix where 500 cows were reported when the pocket was formed, had disappeared from the ration. Typical ration for Lorient soldiers was cabbage, beets, carrots and water. One hundred grams of bread (roughly three ounces) was issued per man per day plus three cigarettes (ersatz) per week. A gradual shift of troops from Lorient to St. Nazaire was instigated to ease the food shortage.

In St. Nazaire the troops fared a little better but compared with what the Americans ate, their diet was still very poor. Extensive truck gardening was started early in the spring by troops in rear areas out of reach of Panther artillery.

END IN SIGHT

Morale of soldiers, despite pep talks by officers, continued to dwindle. Hitler's birthday,



As the inevitable end came for the German forces opposing the 66th Division, a Panther negotiating team (above) enters no man's land under a flag of truce to seek the unconditional Nazi surrender. The group above is headed for the Cordemais railway station, scene of many previous meetings with the Germans. By this time the Germans had lost all stomach for war and the firing along both flanks of the truce area was almost at a standstill.

April 20, was an occasion for a series of parties, awarding of medals and promotions to stabilize morale. All soldiers took a new oath of allegiance to Der Fuehrer. But it wasn't enough to stem the tide. When reports came in a few days later supposedly of Hitler's death, most of the soldiers gave up hope of ever salvaging a victory. Troops took a new oath of allegiance this time to Admiral Doenitz, new commander of all German forces.

Desertions to our lines increased and the rate of executions in the pockets to maintain discipline went up proportionately. All soldiers caught deserting were shot. German soldiers were promised 100 cigarettes and immediate return to Germany (there wasn't much left of it) for prevention of another from deserting. Numerous "in-

cidents" were reported between officers wanting to hold on and enlisted men who desired to surrender. One source reported 19 soldiers were executed at one time for attempts to desert. Principal leader against capitulation was Brigadier General Kuse. He sent lists of reliable Nazi party men to listen to complaints in each platoon and take steps to rectify them. Fear of an Allied attack with tanks and planes failed to spur unity in the pockets. According to one report that emanated from the pocket, 150 to 200 foreign soldiers (Poles and Russians) were executed for disloyalty. Another nine German soldiers were court-martialed for destruction of weapons.

All information concerning progress of the war was cut off from the German soldiers. Ra-



The Germans were at the station already waiting for the 66th representatives. The group moved into a nearby shell-torn cafe where the Allied officers laid down their terms: "Unconditional surrender." Immediately Hauptmann Mueller, back to camera upper photo, representative of General Junck, began to talk about "technical difficulties." The 66th team (left to right, Colonel Keating, Major Parr and Captain Hochstetter who did the talking) suspected that Mueller was stalling. Below Hochstetter demanded if Mueller had the authority to sign the surrender. Mueller admitted he did not. With that, Keating broke off the meeting abruptly and told Mueller to come back with somebody who had authority.







German Major Engelken realized that further resistance to the 66th would only mean more casualties for the defenders of the pockets. He scanned the unconditional terms, then with a shrug of his shoulders and a flourish of a well-manicured hand, signed the surrender. Copies were signed in English and French as well as German. Just before he dismissed his prisoners, Colonel Keating asked Engelken if he would turn over his pistol as an indication of good faith. The major replied he would rather have General Junck give up his pistol at formal ceremonies later. Keating didn't insist and dismissed Engelken, Hauptmann Mueller and a newly-commissioned lieutenant who came along as interpreter. He walked with them to the edge of no-man's land. Just before leaving, he demanded that the Germans turn over to him 30 German Lugers the following day. To this Engelken agreed and the pistols were delivered promptly.

Opposite page. Mueller came back later that day with Major Engelken, German General Junck's chief of staff. Tall, Prussian-like Engelken announced gruffly he was authorized to surrender the troops and asked to see the terms. This time the meeting took place just within the 66th lines. Typifying the despondence of the German staff at the fortunes of war is the expression on the face of Hauptmann Mueller (opposite page) as he reads the final surrender terms imposed by the Panthers.



According to the surrender terms, Panthermen were scheduled to enter the Lorient pocket at 7 o'clock in the morning. An hour before that time, all roads that had been cleared of mines were jammed with vehicles, ready to move in and take possession of the territory. The infantrymen, as usual, walked in.





Although Panthermen expected a warm reception by the liberated French, they were not prepared for the near-frenzy their entry into the pockets caused among the civilians. People were hysterical with joy and showered flowers, kisses and champagne on their liberators.

dios had long since been confiscated. Prisoners stated the men were very receptive to American news bulletins shot by cannon. The Germans knew the end was coming but some still held out. There was Colonel Borst, commanding officer of the Fifth Armed Force Regiment, who told his men: "We have to hold out so that those Yankees will respect us and give us honorable terms. Then, when we get back to Germany,

we'll do the same as in '18, wear civvies and start all over again."

But Colonel Borst's and General Kuse's voices were weak compared to the mighty blast of the Panther military machine. On some fronts the fighting became so one-sided that front line observers called to the Germans over loudspeakers, announcing the targets they would destroy seconds before the shells came. Unit commanders



The French Tri-Color was everywhere. All around were happy smiles on people who came decked out in their Sunday best to draw their first breath of free air since the fall of France.



heard themselves named over the speakers and then saw their CP's go up in dust.

Despite their professed reluctance to allow a surrender, officers had each soldier learn in English the following phrase: "My name is I am a (rank). I was born on (date). My home address is I am sorry that I may not say anything else, according to the Geneva convention." Each soldier was also thoroughly familiarized with his rights as a prisoner of war.

Under the squeeze of the ever-tightening ring that cut off supplies and exacted with its superior fighting ability an increasing toll of casualties, the German High Command finally admitted he had no other choice. He asked General Kramer for an armistice to discuss peace terms.

HOSTILITIES END

Last days of German resistance were filled with excitement and rumors. All of Division headquarters was abuzz when Lt. Wallenstein of the Lorient CIC detachment sent in a message that an insurrectionist element of General Fahrmbacher's command had asked for an armistice. The whole thing, supposedly an air-tight secret might just as well have been broadcast. Half hour later civilians in Nantes were getting ready to celebrate fall of the pockets. As it turned out, the story was a false alarm, and Wallenstein blamed it on the fact that word of the armistice request got back to the Lorient general who promptly squelched it.

The shell-torn railroad station of Cordemais was the scene of the opening session of the brief negotiations that led to the surrender of the St. Nazaire pocket. There on May 7th, Colonel John Keating, 66th Division chief of staff, met with Captain Mueller to discuss terms. The negotiation party moved to a small cafe 100 yards from the station where in the midst of shambles of what once was the taproom, they laid down their portfolios and started talking. It became apparent immediately to the Allied negotiating that Captain Mueller had little or no authority to commit the German command to any agreement. The meeting broke up with



Practically every jeep that entered the pocket was encircled by happy French who insisted on handshakes and toasts to the Allies. A different reception was received from the captive Germans. Theirs was strictly military although affable enough. Many German officers like those at the right greeted 66th men with a "Heil Hitler" while others went back to the regular military salute.







Hauptmann Mueller scowls as he reads the 66th Division surrender terms.



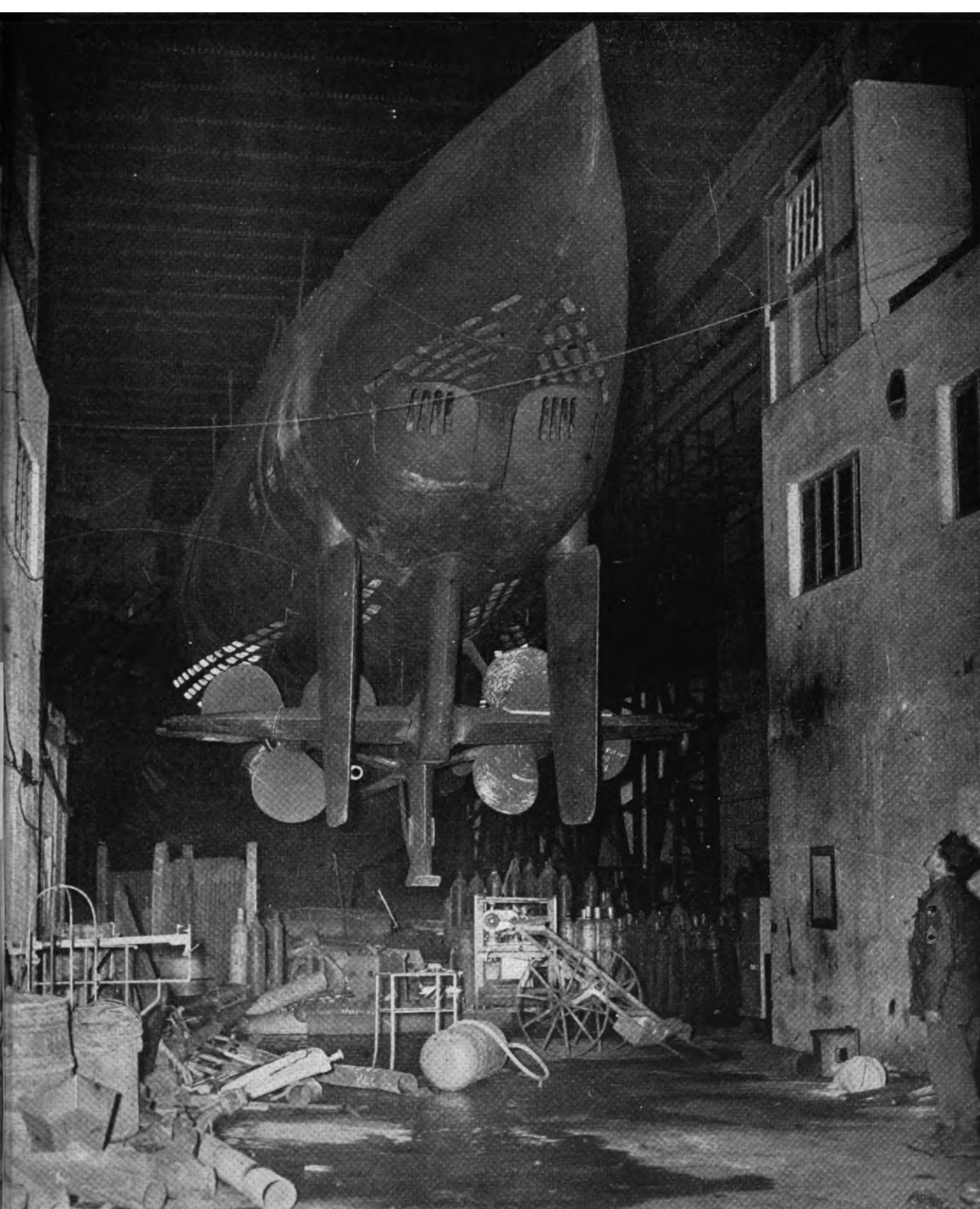
Naval vessels captured from the Germans ran into millions of dollars. Above is some of the harbor craft that were moored alongside the huge sub-pens and escaped destruction. Below submarine crews wait the arrival of Yank troops.





The Germans were lined up, bag and baggage, awaiting orders from the 66th. Three Nazi officers in the picture above, with their automobiles, bicycles and bags in the background, wait for the conquering troops. They kept their bags. Autos and bicycles were luxuries considered unnecessary in PW enclosures. Below an infantry company is lined up, standing at rigid attention while its officers ask a jeep driver for instructions.





Here is one of the German U-boats inside the huge concrete pens at Lorient. This craft was in drydock for repairs.





Lt. Gen. Fahrmbacher, commanding general of the German forces in Lorient, hands his pistol in unconditional surrender to Major General H. F. Kramer, 66th's commanding general.

—Caudan, France

Opposite page, top. At the formal ceremonies for the surrender of Lorient, 66th Chief of Staff Colonel Keating brought glum Lt. Gen. Fahrmbacher to the large meadow where General Kramer and his staff were waiting. He opened the brief ceremony with: "General Kramer, may I present Lt. Gen. Fahrmbacher, commanding general of the German forces in Lorient." Bottom. Stiffly and with gloved hand, General Fahrmbacher saluted. General Kramer, dressed in his ceremonial belt, made him hold the salute for a brief second before returning it.



The average German soldier in the Lorient pocket was pretty glad the war was over. He had no stomach for more war. The soldier at the left plays some popular German tunes on his accordion while at the right, two who didn't want to show their faces, play chess under the watchful eye of a French guard posted by the 66th.

little accomplished except an agreement that they would resume sessions the next morning.

Talks the following morning were along the same pattern. Captain Mueller talked about "technical details" and asked that we send in technical men to confer on "technical" matters. Keating reminded Mueller that there would be no "discussions" but rather under the unconditional surrender terms, his "technicians" would take orders from the Allies. Impatient at the delay, Colonel Keating demanded whether or not he had full authority to sign the surrender. "Doctor" Mueller had to admit he didn't. Again Keating broke up the meeting and it was agreed that a person with authority to act represent General Junck at a session the same afternoon.

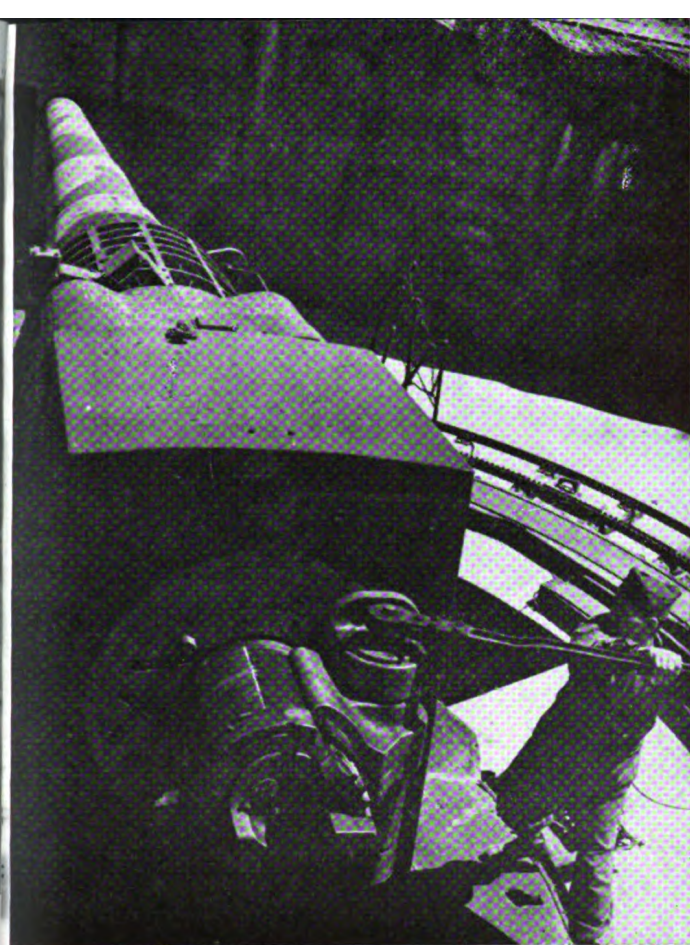
An elaborate lay-out was prepared for the afternoon's session. Instead of meeting between the lines at Cordemais, the Germans came to our lines where a table was set out in the bright summer sun, enabling photographers to catch and record every movement. Accompanying Cap-

tain Mueller was Major Engelken, General Junck's chief of staff. Tough, handsome Engelken's approach was different from that of the diplomatic Mueller. He gruffly stated he had come prepared to sign, asked for the papers and after a few minutes of explanatory remarks, with a grunt and a flourish of his well-manicured hand, signed the surrender of 28,000 Germans.

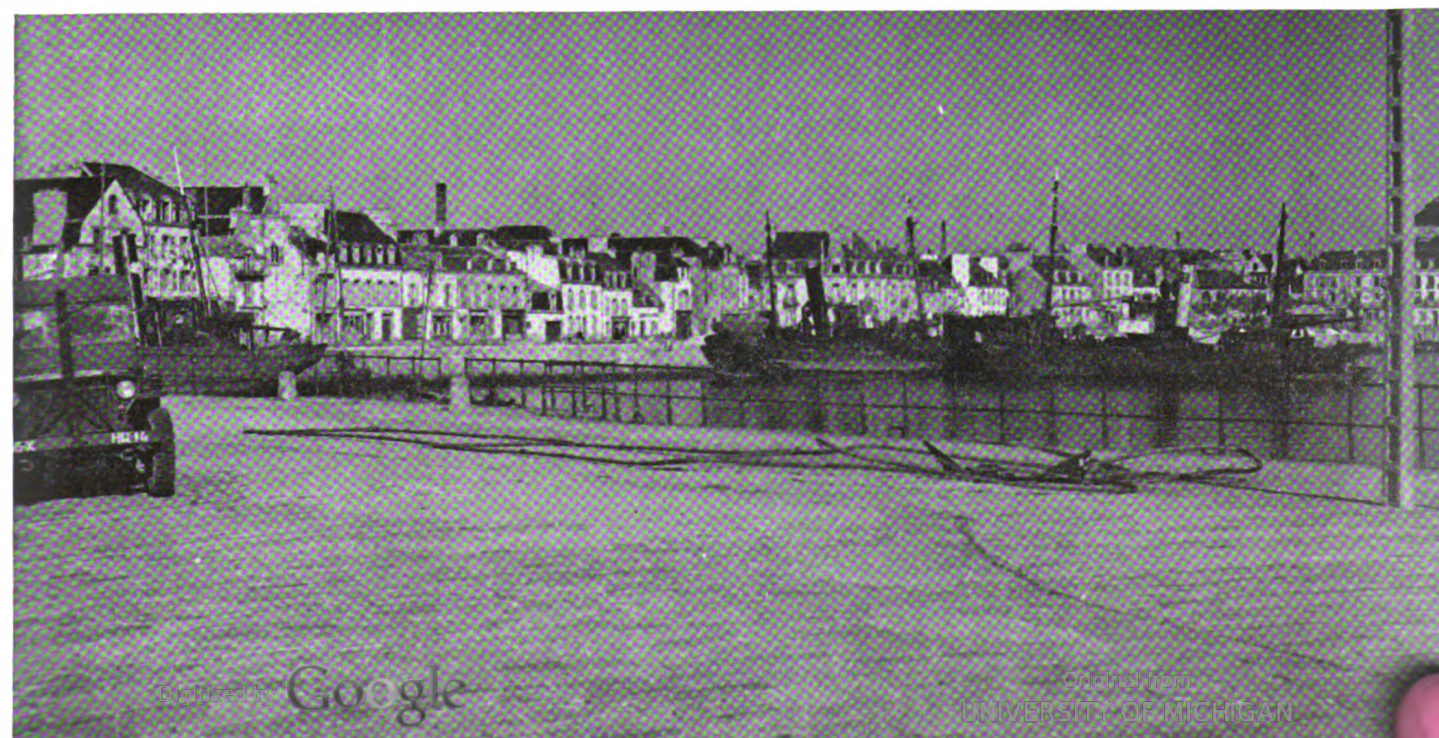
He became the second German officer to sign such a paper. Two days earlier the Lorient pocket had agreed to unconditional surrender. Although the truces were not effective immediately, all firing ceased.

For the first time since they landed in the ETO, Panthermen laid aside their rifles, got a chance to wash and shave, without being ready to duck into a hole, and lolled in the warm French sunshine. War, if not all work, in World War II had ended for the 66th Division, after 133 continuous days in the line, a record few divisions could match.

Although the Germans had unconditionally



A prized curio of captured enemy materiel were the 340-mm guns the Germans had on the base of the Quiberon peninsula. At the upper left, Technical Sergeant Robert McBride of Superior, Wisconsin, tries to open the gigantic breach of one of the three guns. At the upper right is one of the thousands of mined-area signs the Germans put up to mark their defense areas. One of the few battle areas that escaped with little destruction was the non-strategic city of Quiberon on the tip of the peninsula that jutted into the Atlantic between the two German pockets. Part of the peaceful harbor is shown below on the day of its liberation.





surrendered, no one with the exception of a few key personnel entered the pockets for a couple of days. During that time the Germans cleared or marked all mine fields, cleaned and stacked their weapons and assembled in certain areas for the convenience of Panthermen who marched in to take possession of their hard-won territory.

ALLO, YOU YANKEE BOYS

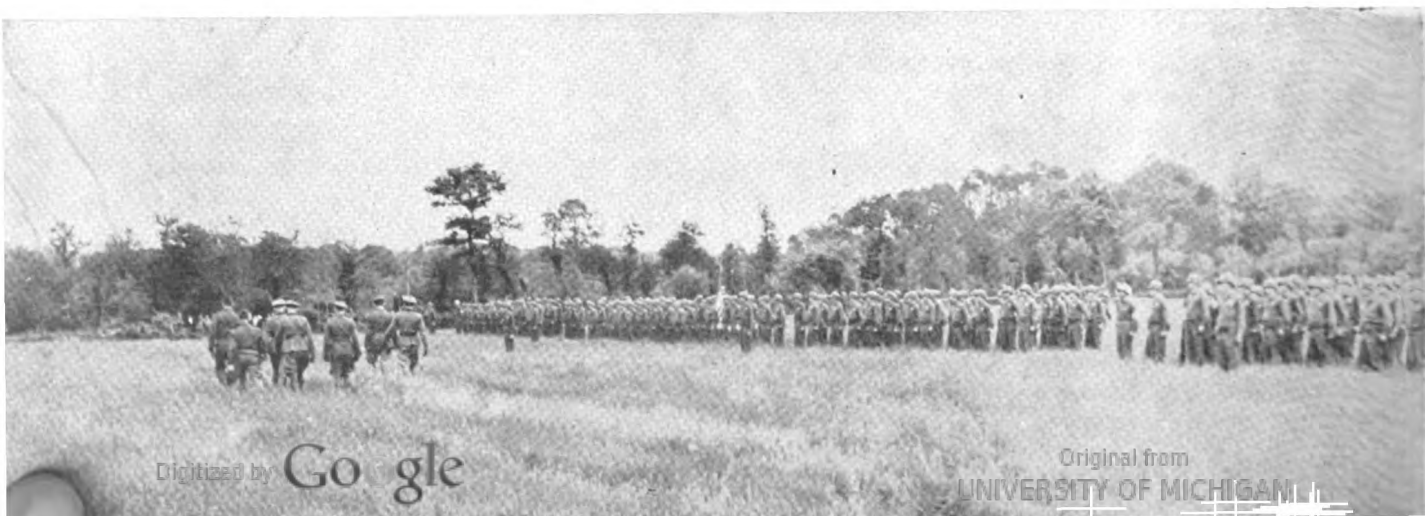
At 7 o'clock in the morning of May 10th, Panthermen moved into Lorient. The spectacle that greeted their eyes testified to the accuracy and effectiveness of the 66th arms. Practically every house and building was wrecked. Most of the streets were torn up and such luxuries as electric lights, telephones and water and gas mains had been destroyed long ago.

Civilians gave the Panthermen a rousing reception. They lined the streets for miles, dressed in their Sunday best, carrying armfuls of flowers and bottles of champagne and cognac for the liberating troops. Girls flocked around vehicles, pinning flowers on soldiers and offering drinks and kisses to anyone within reach. Big signs draped across the roads read "Vive L'Amerique." Many pretty mademoiselles shouted out: "Allo, you Yankee boys!"

The French Tri-color was in evidence everywhere. Possession of the flag was forbidden by the Nazis. Evidently the French did a good job of concealing them. In utter contrast to the smiling French civilians were the gloomy de-



French Brigadier General Borgnis Desbordes and 66th's Brigadier General Francis W. Rollins, Allied commanders of the troops surrounding the Lorient pocket under General Kramer were glad it was all over (upper photo). Center, General Kramer reviews his honor guard troops at the surrender. Below, Colonel Keating leads General Fahrmbacher and his aides off the surrender field.





Kraut prisoners line up in front of their barracks while (below) a Panther infantryman goes through their identifications and personal belongings, looking for contraband.



feated Krauts who stood in huge formations glaring at the victors as we passed by. They were formed by their officers who stood alongside, still retaining some of their haughty air. Officers had with them their sedans but didn't keep their cars long. Panthermen were getting more and more mobile as the advance into the pocket progressed.

Cars weren't the only "loot" relieved from the Germans. Luger pistols, P-38's, carbines, military watches, cameras by the score were soon in the hands of 66th men. One major from BBS (British Base Section at Rennes) pulled a fast one. He arrived in the pocket with a truck, posing as a CIC representative, and filled it with

cameras. Another favorite item of loot were Nazi swastikas which weren't brazenly flying at the time but which could be found with little difficulty in sleeping quarters and offices.

Strictly in compliance with provisions of the Geneva convention, Panthermen conducted themselves as true soldiers and despite all the atrocities attributed to the Germans, maintained a proper attitude toward the prisoners. A number of German officers were beaten by the French. Many had their clothes torn off while the French shamelessly stripped them of personal belongings which they scattered all over the ground. Many Panthermen saw such actions with disgust. Not only did the French violate Geneva convention



rules in their actions toward the prisoners but started on a campaign to loot homes of French civilians, stripping them of everything from bed sheets to stoves.

GENERAL GIVES UP HIS PISTOL

Formal surrender ceremonies of Lorient took place that afternoon at 4 o'clock in a large field near Caudan, small city along the northern fringe of the pocket. With a company of infantry as an honor guard, General Kramer lined up with his staff to wait the arrival of Lt. Gen. Fahrmbacher. With General Kramer was also Brigadier General Rollins and Brigadier General Borgnis Desbordes, commander of French troops in the Lorient sector. A brief ceremony was held while the 66th Division band played the Star Spangled Banner and the French national anthem. A few minutes before four o'clock, General Fahrmbacher with members of his staff arrived in an open sedan at the far end of the field as a few drops of rain began to sprinkle. They were escorted to the spot General Kramer stood by Colonel Keating. The tall, paunchy German general trembled slightly as he stood at attention about three feet in front of General Kramer. Colonel Keating opened the ceremonies.

"General Kramer, may I present General Fahrmbacher, commanding general of the German forces in Lorient." General Fahrmbacher saluted smartly and held the salute while our general returned it. Then Colonel Keating introduced the German general to General Rollins and salutes were exchanged. However, when he was presented to the French general, General Fahrmbacher didn't salute. He just stood looking straight ahead. There was a few seconds of painful silence which General Fahrmbacher broke



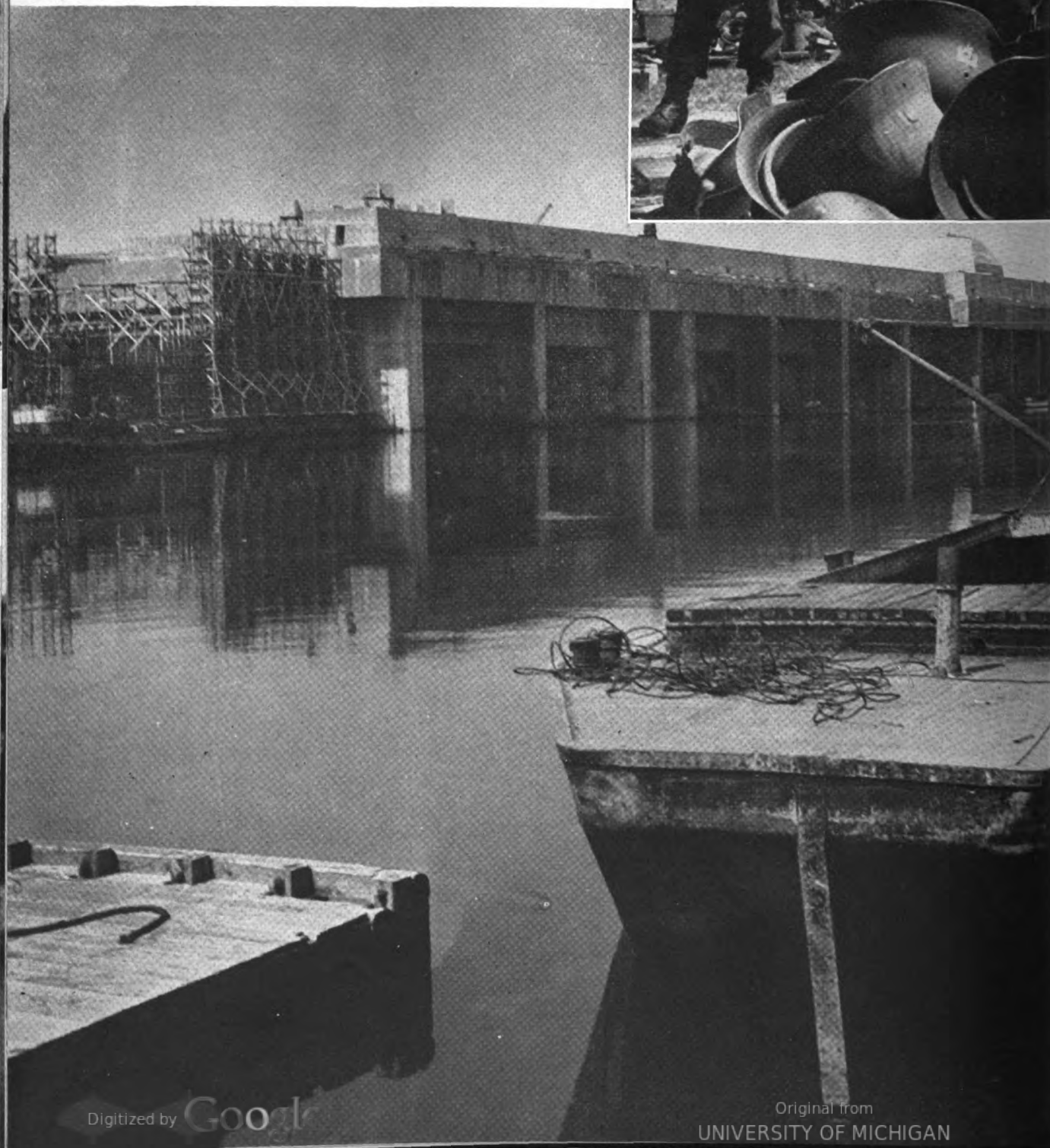
Typifying the ultimate in Nazi arrogance is the captured officer in the top picture. In broken English he defended the German aggressions. Below several members of a German mess crew get water for their company meal, almost entirely oblivious of conquering Panthermen marching by only a few yards away.

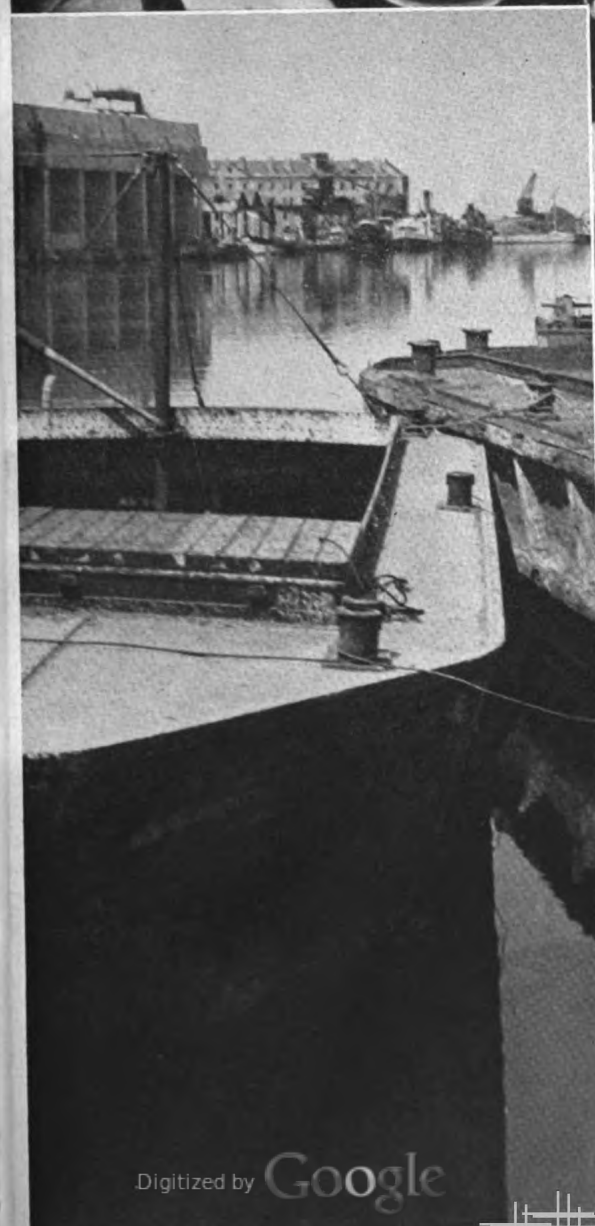


Below is the damaged Cathedral of St. Nazaire and above is a group of German soldiers awaiting orders from General Kramer.



From these German U-boat pens captured by the 66th in St. Nazaire emerged the submarine wolf-packs that took a big toll of Allied shipping in the Atlantic. Perhaps from one of the pens here came the vessel that torpedoed the Leopoldville. A massive 18-foot re-inforced concrete roof protected the subs from air attack.





Symbolic of German defeat are these stacks of German helmets, rifles and gas masks which fell to the 66th.

Major General Werner Junck, commanding general of all German forces in the St. Nazaire pocket, surrenders unconditionally all troops under his command to the Panther commander, General Kramer.

— Bouvron, France







Surrender of St. Nazaire took place in a field filled with multi-colored wild flowers. Here is the Allied line-up headed by General Kramer, as they wait the arrival of General Junck. At the left, General Kramer talks to a member of his honor guard.

by announcing that he had come to surrender unconditionally all German forces under his command to General Kramer, commander of the Allied forces.

With that announcement, he whipped out his pistol still in its case and handed it to General Kramer. At the same time he saluted. The surrender was complete. Then our general told his prisoner that his men had fought valiantly and guaranteed they would be treated fairly according to rules of war. General Fahrmbacher was dismissed and as he was led off the field by Colonel Keating, our old man who had growled plenty during the war grinned from ear to ear. One job was done with one more to go! St. Nazaire.

Next day, the 11th of May, Panthermen moved into the huge St. Nazaire pocket. The reception was identical to that at Lorient. Streets were strewn with flowers and wine bottles and pretty girls lined the avenues as we moved in to take over. Vehicles were obliged to stop at almost every community as citizens crowded the streets to heap praise on the conquerors. Those few hours of supreme glory almost made the filth and grime of battle worth while . . . almost but not quite. Quickly Panthermen fanned out to seize every key point in the pocket. Troops lost no time in occupying the huge submarine pens and General Junck's headquarters as well as the installations at LeBaule, once famed French resort community which now was a



The Loire-Inferieure district of France was a merry one that night as the French toasted men of the 66th.

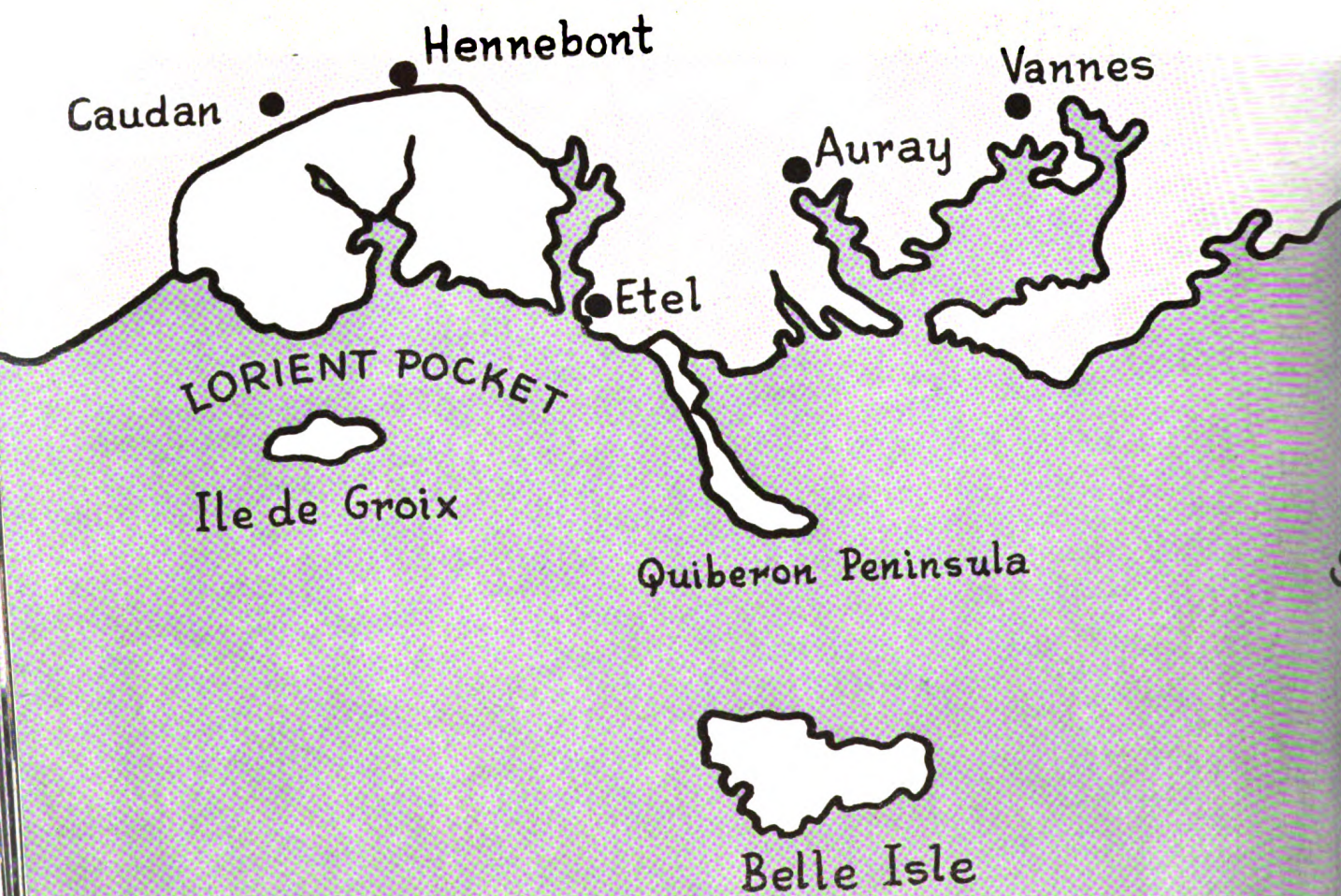
maize of barbed wire and tank traps. Movement into St. Nazaire was orderly. The German troops were complacent and appeared glad the war was over. Panthermen had pounded out of their souls the last grains of desire for conquest.

General Kramer and General Junck met at 10 o'clock that morning in a flower-filled field near what was left of the city of Bouvron. Stiffly General Junck handed his pistol to General Kramer. At that moment, 10:03 A.M., May 11th, war for the 66th Infantry Division was officially over.

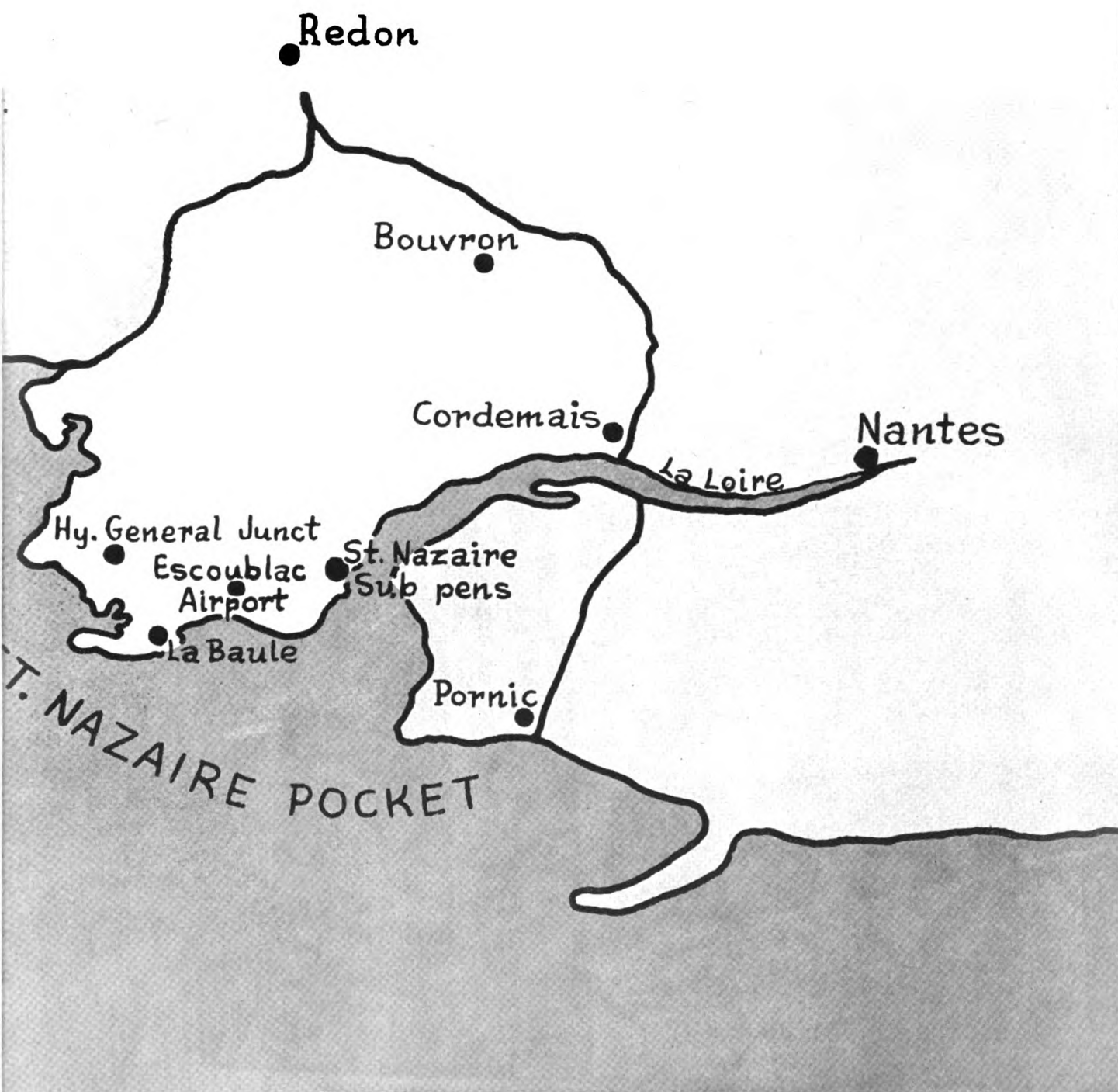
In conquering the 50,000 Germans we had cleared the last vestige of Nazism in France. We had liberated 856 square miles of French territory and freed 186,000 civilians. The total of

German booty we captured in vessels, weapons and material ran into the countless millions. But the victories were not without deep loss to the Division. Casualties totaled 2,170 enlisted men and 78 officers. That Panthermen displayed valor in combat is shown by the number of awards made for gallantry; 31 silver stars, 34 soldiers' medals, 483 bronze stars, and 34 French Croix de Guerre.

General Kramer, who two years and one month before received the division's colors when the 66th was activated and had trained the men and watched them perform magnificently on their first combat mission had this to say when the Germans surrendered: "I'm proud of my Panthermen. I salute you!"



rmel



Surrounded by the 66th, 50,000 Germans holding 856 square miles of French territory, fought furiously with their backs against the sea. Bottled up with the Germans were 186,000 civilians. In addition to the St. Nazaire and Lorient pockets, the Germans held Quiberon peninsula and Ile de Croix and Belle Isle.



By now fairly adept at "parley-vous," three Panthermen above try it out on some liberated French women. Top photo shows one of the many German cars Panthermen drove away from the pocket.



Equally as jubilant as the reception the 66th received in Lorient was that in the St. Nazaire area where the liberated French civilians turned out en masse to greet the victors. Above is a street in LaBaule on the coast, once the mecca of American tourists. Below is one of the groups that gathered at every cross-road, stopped all American vehicles to cover them with flowers and praise.



Chapter VIII

Points of Occupation

With the cessation of hostilities, Panthermen didn't have long to rest on their laurels, relax and get in some extra "sack time." Three days after the pockets fell, the 66th was ordered to Germany for occupation duty. On May 14th, we turned over the pockets to the French and began moving with our destination at Koblenz on the Rhine River, 700 miles away.

Despite admonitions by unit commanders, parts of the Division convoy resembled a gypsy caravan and included almost every make of foreign car produced in Europe, vehicles taken from the Germans who had no further use for them in PW cages. Many of the motorcades went via Paris, as was the custom of practically everyone traveling through northern France, where vehicle breakdowns miraculously sprung up, causing delay for "repairs." That, of course, gave time for the Follies Bergere, Casino Club, Montmartre district and a peek at Paris from the first landing of the Eiffel Tower (the top was closed during the war).

Paris night club prices didn't permit of too much levity on francs but with a couple cartons of cigarettes, champagne flowed like water. Most of the men took advantage of what they thought was their last chance to hobnob with Allied people because in Germany, the strict non-fraternization regulation was still in force. As it turned out there was one other stop generally made before Germany was entered. That was in the fantastic little country of Luxembourg where little pastry shops abounded with chocolate goodies and streets were neat as a pin. There was a small problem of changing French francs into Luxembourg currency but nothing an enterprising Panthermen couldn't manage.

Our mission in Germany was short-lived and hardly was the 66th settled than we were on the move again. Our job there was to set up occupational controls over 2,400 square miles of the

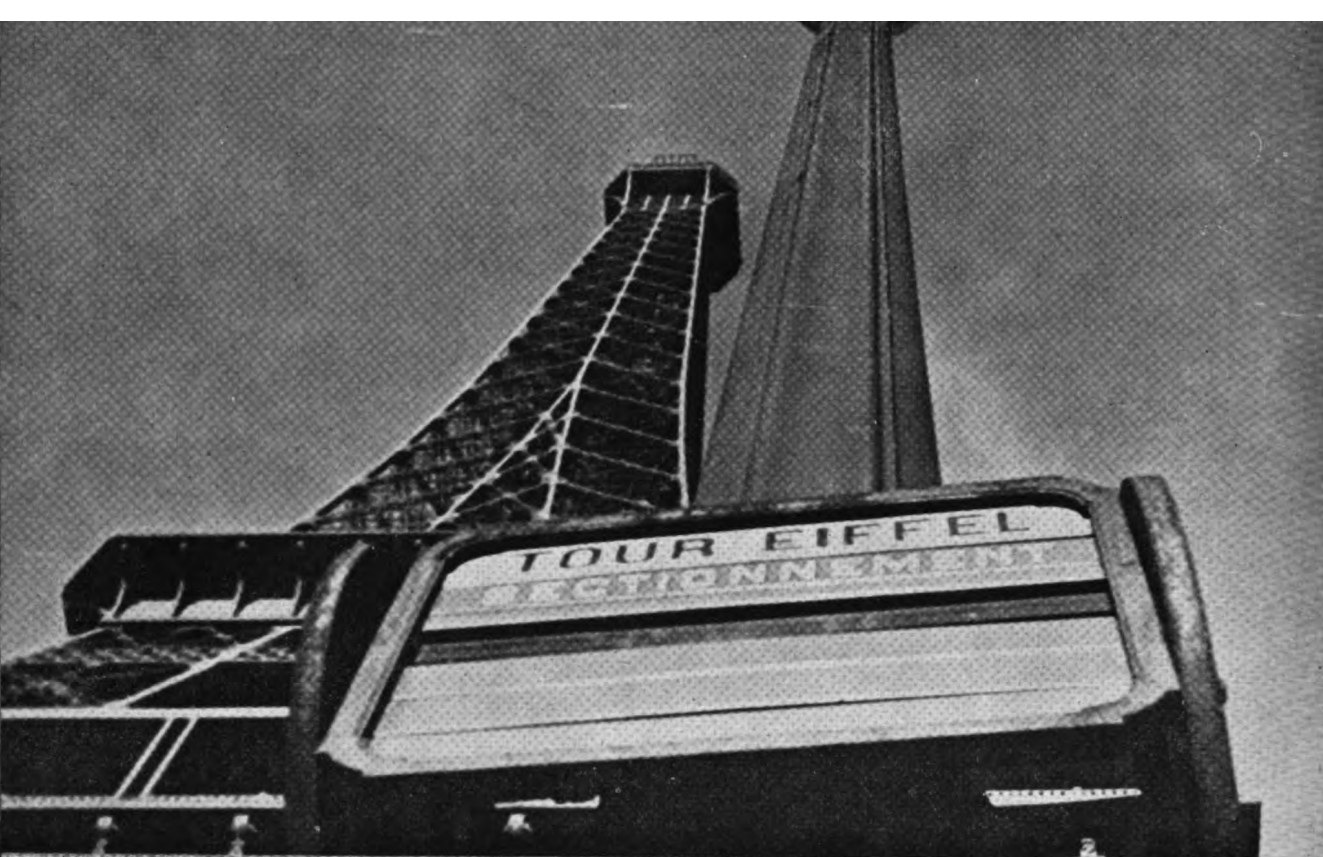
Reich including 11 landkreises and the city of Koblenz on the Rhine. It was our responsibility to see that the almost million Germans in the area behaved themselves and abided by military government regulations.

In this nest of Nazism we impounded all weapons, enforced the nightly curfew, checked civilians for proper identification and rounded up as many Nazi big-wigs as we could get our hands on. In our area were huge displaced persons camps holding prisoner-laborers from many European countries, especially Russia. A few days after the 66th Division moved in, over 3,000 displaced persons were started daily on their long trek home. Prisoner of war camps had to be supervised, too, and arrangements were made for gradual release of PW's.

Relations with civilians, quite naturally, were not as pleasant as they had been with the French. The Germans, groomed to taste the fruits of victory, resented bitterly defeat. They showed it, too, as the vastness of the German defeat began to sink into their minds and they began to comprehend that the glorious rosy days Hitler had promised them were gone and nothing lay ahead but shame and hard work. Nothing gave Panthermen more of a thrill and griped the Krauts more than the sight of the American flag flying proudly over a once-Nazi city. As one looked at the flag and compared it with the decayed nation it flew over, one surged with a feeling of intense pride in the fortitude of Yankee arms.

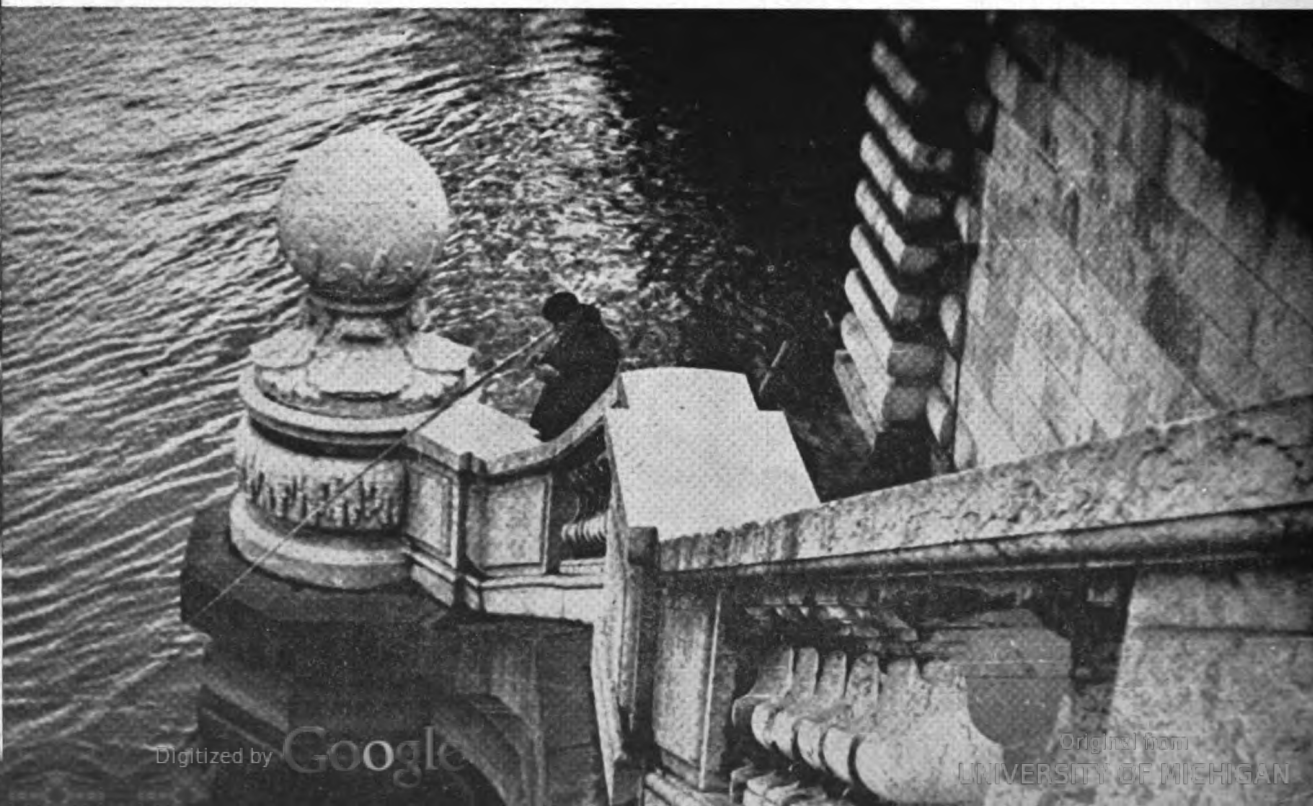
BACK TO FRANCE

We had no more than a good start with our new job than orders came to move again . . . this time back to France and Marseille. Immediately this gave rise to a host of new rumors, the crux of which was that as long as Marseille was a POE, the division must be headed for the CBI. The 66th arrived in Marseille by June 7



Fantastic Paris holds a myriad of memories for Panthermen who visited its historic sites, its numerous sidewalk cafes and expensive night clubs. They saw the gaiety of the Champs Elysee and took a free ride on the Metro. In contrast to the hurly-burly of Paris streets is the lonely peddler in the lower picture, fishing from one of the fashionable bridges that cross the Seine, hoping to catch something small to augment his meager diet or for a larger fish that will bring a big price on the black market.

OPPOSITE PAGE—Signs on the border of Luxembourg left little doubt among men in the Division that we were entering Germany. In big letters they proclaimed: "Don't fraternize."



BUILT BY
THE
MIGHTY MIDGETS
1303-E-CO. F

You! ARE NOW
ENTERING *Germany*
DON'T FRATERNIZE

2 WAY CL. 40
OR
1 WAY CL. 70

to find we were assigned to General Ratay's DBS (Delta Base Section) to operate two huge staging areas for CBI-bound troops going through the city's port.

In effect, General Ratay pointed out two vast stretches of land north of Marseille, Camp Arles and St. Victoret, and told us to get them ready to receive the first of 100,000 troops within two weeks.

We looked out and all we could see was sand . . . plenty of that and little else. To enumerate all the items we didn't have that were necessary to open any sized camp, let alone two large enough to house 100,000 men, would take three volumes. There were no tents, no water, no latrines, no roads, no food supply, no kitchens, no headquarters, no showers, no recreation, no churches . . . only sand whipped around in thick clouds by the Mistral, continual wind that blows down from the Alps along the Rhone River and right into Camp Arles and St. Victoret. This was the job that faced the 66th Division, a combat team trained only for battle.

Not only was the Division assigned to billet and quarter the troops and see that they were relatively happy during their stay at the staging area, we had to process them and their equipment to ready them for the trip to the Pacific.

Division men, equal to any task, pitched in with gusto. Out of the sands of southern France rose tent cities almost overnight. It took ingenuity and plenty of sweat and work. When the troops began to arrive, there was a staggering amount of administrative work to be done. Men trained for years to kill with a BAR were now pecking away at a typewriter and mess sergeants used to feeding a company now literally cooked for regiments. Physical discomfort for stagees was a tremendous job to overcome. With little to occupy their minds (we did all the work) the morale problem was a headache. Men often woke up in the mornings to find their cots covered with a half-inch of sand from a windstorm during the night. Often their messkits were half full of sand before they could find a place to eat their food.

For recreation five theatres were put up in



This is Koblenz . . . a shambles . . . one of the many cities where the 66th began military government.





In contrast to the flat plains of France's Atlantic coast, Panthermen found Germany a country of rolling terrain and heavily wooded. Here one of the Division convoys pulled off the main road into a meadow long enough for chow.

Arles alone, with three more in St. Victoret. Over 200 USO and GI stage shows played to a million and a half soldiers. A tremendous bathing site, Kramer Beach, was set up on the Mediterranean to accommodate 7,500 swimmers at one time. Regular trains were operated to take stagees on furlough and leave to the Riviera, to Paris and to Lourdes.

Nearly 150,000 troops were redeployed to the CBI and later to the States before the two camps closed in September. Staffing the Arles camp were the 262nd and 264th Infantry Regiments while the 263rd Infantry Regiment staffed St. Victoret. The 870th Field Artillery Battalion was converted into military police; the 871st

Field Artillery Battalion was assigned the job of guarding the gigantic installations at the Miramas Depot; the POE's at Marseille and Port de Bouc were operated by the 872nd Field Artillery Battalion and the heavy artillery battalion, the 721st, was converted into a transportation unit.

On shoulders of the 266th Engineer Battalion fell the tremendous job of keeping the physical plants of the camps going. They built roads, constructed shower units, set up water and garbage disposal systems equivalent to those in a medium-sized American city. Malaria control squads of the 366th Medical Battalion in their fight against the dreaded disease prevalent in



The Germans in frantic flight across the Rhine river, blew their bridges behind them. Here is all that remained of one of the huge spans at Koblenz when the 66th arrived.

that part of France spread over three and a half million feet of ditches and canals with diesel oil. So effective was their work that not one case of malaria developed in the staging areas.

Other men of the 366th set up a 250-bed hospital while still others set up the largest dental clinic in the European theatre of operations. It was the job of the Division's ordnance company, the 766th, to process and crate the hundreds of tons of equipment that poured daily through the camps on the way to the ports. The 66th Quartermaster Company which normally served 15,000 men of the Division was responsible for supplying 100,000 men during the peak operation period of the camp. One bakery alone operated by the company turned out 33,000 pounds of

bread daily. The three-month gasoline issue supplied by the QM Company totaled nearly one and a half million gallons. The 566th Signal Company installed a phone system that handled a daily load of 21,000 calls. Border patrol duty along the Spanish-French line was assigned the 66th Cavalry Recon Troop. The Division's MP platoon was on duty in surrounding communities.

The Marseille area might have been pretty rough as far as working conditions were concerned, but when it came to recreation, southern France had a lot to offer. Biggest attraction, of course, was the clear blue waters of the Mediterranean Sea, the beautiful white sand beaches and the sun that gave such beautiful tans.



Division headquarters in the Koblenz landkries was in a huge monastery at Maria Laach where even the German armies during their hey-day were forbidden to enter. Above, Corporal George Swistak, Panther photographer, chats with one of the hard-working monks. In the lower picture a Pantherman asks directions from one of the Sisters.



WHEN WORK WAS DONE

All along the southern coast of France, from the Italian border almost down to Spain, Panthermen found time to enjoy the cooling salt water. Best spot was on the Riviera where the army had taken over all the swank hotels and put them at the disposal of officers and enlisted men . . . places where it cost fortunes to stay in pre-war times.

Many a Pantherman will never forget the wonderful food, beautiful plush rooms and luxurious hand and foot service that greeted us at both Nice and Cannes. There were the wonderful days sleeping on the beach under the unbelievably blue Mediterranean sky, playing beach ball and having photographs made by the quaint seashore photographers. In the evenings was dancing under the brilliant moon on huge terraces overlooking the sea which supplied cooling breezes with a wonderful salty tang. Those were the best days men of the Division ever enjoyed.

The Riviera wasn't the only place to swim,



When the 66th took over occupation duty in Koblenz . . . the Germans knew it. No civilian moved without proper credentials supplied by the occupying forces. In the top picture, a Panther infantryman stationed at a bridge in Koblenz checks the passport of a former Nazi. When civilians violated the stringent regulations enforced by General Kramer as military governor, court action was prompt. Notices of sentences, like the one below, printed in both English and German, were widely circulated to announce each violation.

either. Farther down the beach towards Marseille was the 66th Division beach at LaCiotat, not as sumptuous as the Riviera but the beach was just as nice. On the other side of Marseille and beyond Kramer Beach was the beach south of the good soldier city of Montpellier. Favorite hang-out of a lot of Panthermen was the beach near the small city of Ste. Marie de la Mer, near the mouth of the Rhone River. This was the site of many picnics of the Panther Veterans Association.

Swimming wasn't the only form of recreation. Around our camps were a lot of good towns, although at the height of the staging process, most of the cafes had standing room only. In Arles which was usually packed were two movie houses and a huge Red Cross for soldiers. Salon had a theater and Red Cross. The Big Top Red Cross snack bar at St. Martin du Crau, just outside the Arles camp, did a booming business, too. A lot of credit for decorating the Red

Military Government

NOTICE TO THE GERMAN PEOPLE!

For violating Military Government ordinances and proclamations, and for lack of respect to local Police organization, the following sentences have been given by Military Government Courts, Idar-Oberstein:

- 1) Alfred KLOOS, Morschied, was found guilty of having received a pistol from a German flyer and not having turned it in to the Authorities. Since the limit of punishment that can be given by the court that tried him is One year in jail and 10,000 Marks, and THIS WAS NOT CONSIDERED SUFFICIENT PUNISHMENT FOR THE CRIME, he is being held for trial by a higher court where a MUCH GREATER PUNISHMENT WILL BE GIVEN!
- 2) Gustav MAYER, 126 Pras. Rooseveltstr., Idar-Oberstein, has been sentenced to 3 months in jail and 1000 Marks fine for resisting a German policeman who works under the supervision of Military Government!
- 3) Paula RIFFER, Layensiedlung, Idar-Oberstein has been given a provisional sentence of 3 months in jail, for not turning in immediately a weapon which she found. She will also next be tried by a German Court for the wounding of a small child due to an accident in handling the gun. For this she will receive a further sentence, in addition to the one now being served.

Violations of Military Government ordinances and to lawenforcement agencies will bring heavy pen:



In June of 1945 when the 66th arrived in Marseille to set up Camp Arles and St. Victoret three items were very abundant: the Mistral wind, dust and work. It was nothing unusual to wake up in the morning to find a half of an inch of desert sand covering the bed.

Men of the 66th agreed that Arles and Victoret were about the bleakest places in the world. The upper photo gives a bird's-eye view of Arles. Camp Arles headquarters, located in what was once a chateau and later a barn, is below.





A lot of credit for setting up the biggest dental clinic in the ETO to take care of stagees at Camp Arles went to 66th's Major Kenneth Elwell, dental officer. Housed in tents, the clinic sprang up in two weeks, had a staff of 102 dental officers and took care of 800 cases a day. Stars and Stripes gave it a full page spread. Lt. Gen. Lee, commander of ETO's service forces, visited Arles with Brigadier General Ratay of DBS. Lee went away in a huff, however. The 66th provided an honor guard for him and apparently somebody forgot to tell the general about it. In the background is Lt. Bob Bell who later took over the U. S. radio station WOFA in Vienna.

Friday, August 17, 1945

THE STARS AND STRIPES

Page 5

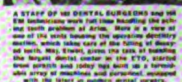
The 66th Fills GI Cavities at ETO's Largest Dental Clinic



THE BLACK PANTHER CROWD is shown in the background of the 66th dental clinic. The clinic is housed in a tent, and the patients are waiting for their turn to be treated. The clinic is the largest of its kind in the ETO, and it is staffed by 102 dental officers. The clinic has been set up in two weeks, and it has already treated 800 cases.

In 2 Weeks—A Reality

ANIES STAGES AREA under the biggest dental clinic in the ETO in the new tent of the 66th dental clinic. The clinic is staffed by 102 dental officers, and it has already treated 800 cases. The clinic has been set up in two weeks, and it has already treated 800 cases. The clinic is the largest of its kind in the ETO, and it is staffed by 102 dental officers. The clinic has been set up in two weeks, and it has already treated 800 cases.



Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

ENLISTED MEN'S STAGING AREA MESS MARSEILLE DISTRICT D.B.S.



Familiar to all men of the 66th were the transient messes at Marseille, operated by DBS. Well-fed Krauts served the chow.

In the midst of a dust storm in the lower photograph, a 66th MP gives directions to a stagee.



Cross clubs goes to Sgt. Boris Muccia of Division headquarters.

Most men were agreed that the three best cities for soldiers were Montpellier, Nimes and Avignon, located on the Rhone River north of Arles. Avignon was the 12th century home of popes and the huge walls encircling the city still stood. It was here that the famous song "Pont du Avignon" was born. In Avignon, too, were some of the best night clubs, notable among which was the Ambassador Club across the Rhone River. Here many a Pantherman danced to the popular tunes of the day including "J'Attendrai," "Je Suis Seul Ce Soir," and the American version of Lily Marlene which began "Please, Mr. Truman, why can't we go home?"

Marseille, France's second city with a popula-

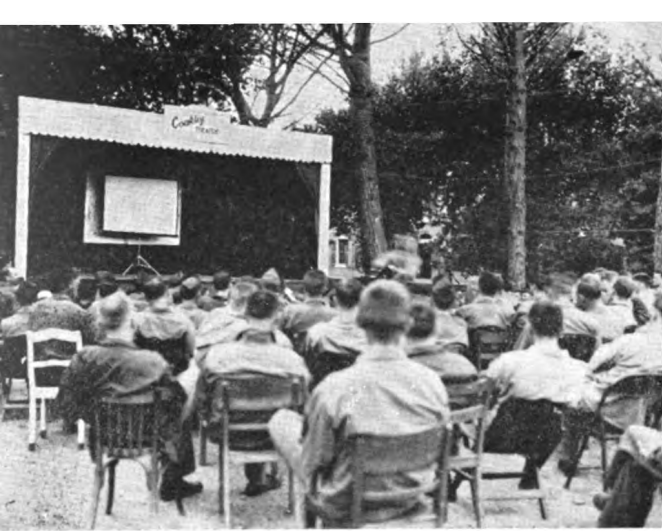


The 66th baseball team carved quite a niche for itself in ETO sports annals by its exploits on the diamond. In turn it copped the XVI corps, ETO ground forces and USFET championships and met defeat only when it competed in the ETO play-offs. Skipped by Lieutenant McCarthy, the team (upper photo) traveled its circuit in a B-17 bomber. Panther bronco busters (below) put on a show for stagees at the Arles Colosseum where once Romans watched gladiators fight farocious lions.

tion of near one million, was a place all by itself. Along the Caniebiere a soldier could find every type of entertainment in the book. DBS had several beautiful movies in continuous operation and operated a transient mess near the railway station that was filling if not appetizing. Whole sections of the city were off limits because they were considered unsafe for American soldiers. They teemed with beggars and cutthroats and

hardly a night passed without a shooting. It was in these sections of the city that murderers and robbers have hid out successfully for years and where even the German Gestapo feared to enter in search of criminals. Marseille's night life was gay and very expensive.

It was in Marseille, too, that the 66th Division's football team roundly trounced the DBS highly-touted team, in a very satisfying victory.



Outdoor movies were held three times a week at the Division CP at Chateau Ville Pail in Coakley theater, named in honor of Lieutenant Coakley, who was lost in the channel. Only drawback to outdoor movies were the bomber-size mosquitoes. Below the French in Arles pay tribute to the 66th at ceremonies. Here General Kramer is marching behind the Panther band.

There was little love lost between men of the Division and DBS.

JAP WAR ENDS

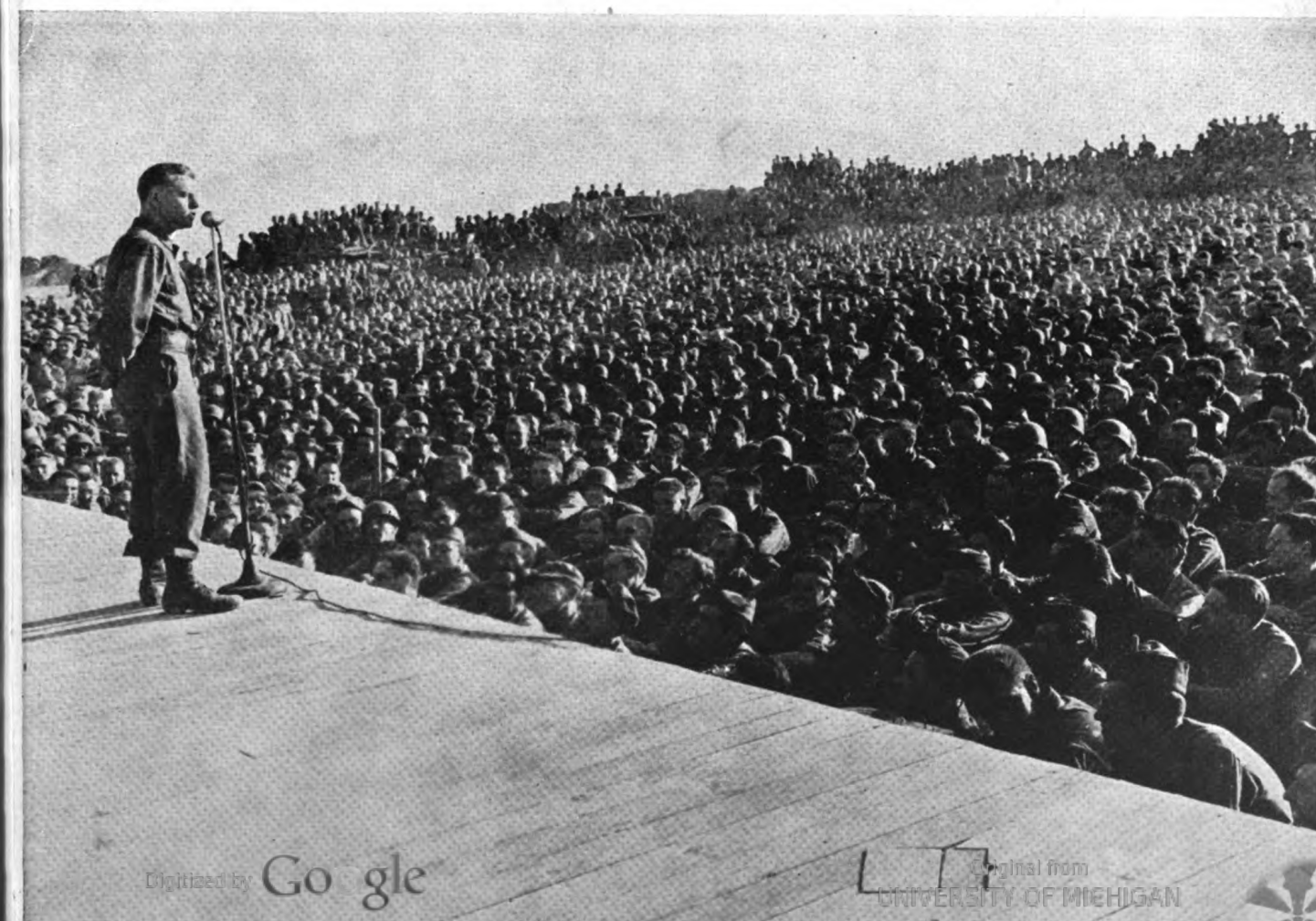
Early in July the tempo of the war against the Japs foretold a rapid termination of resistance. The Okinawa campaign was won, placing American B-29's within easy striking distance of the Japanese homeland. Over 1,200 sorties was the weekly average against Japanese industrial targets, destroying her ability to replace battle losses. Planes from carriers swept up and down the Japanese coast, concentrating on air fields and shipping while heavy surface vessels shelled the coastline.

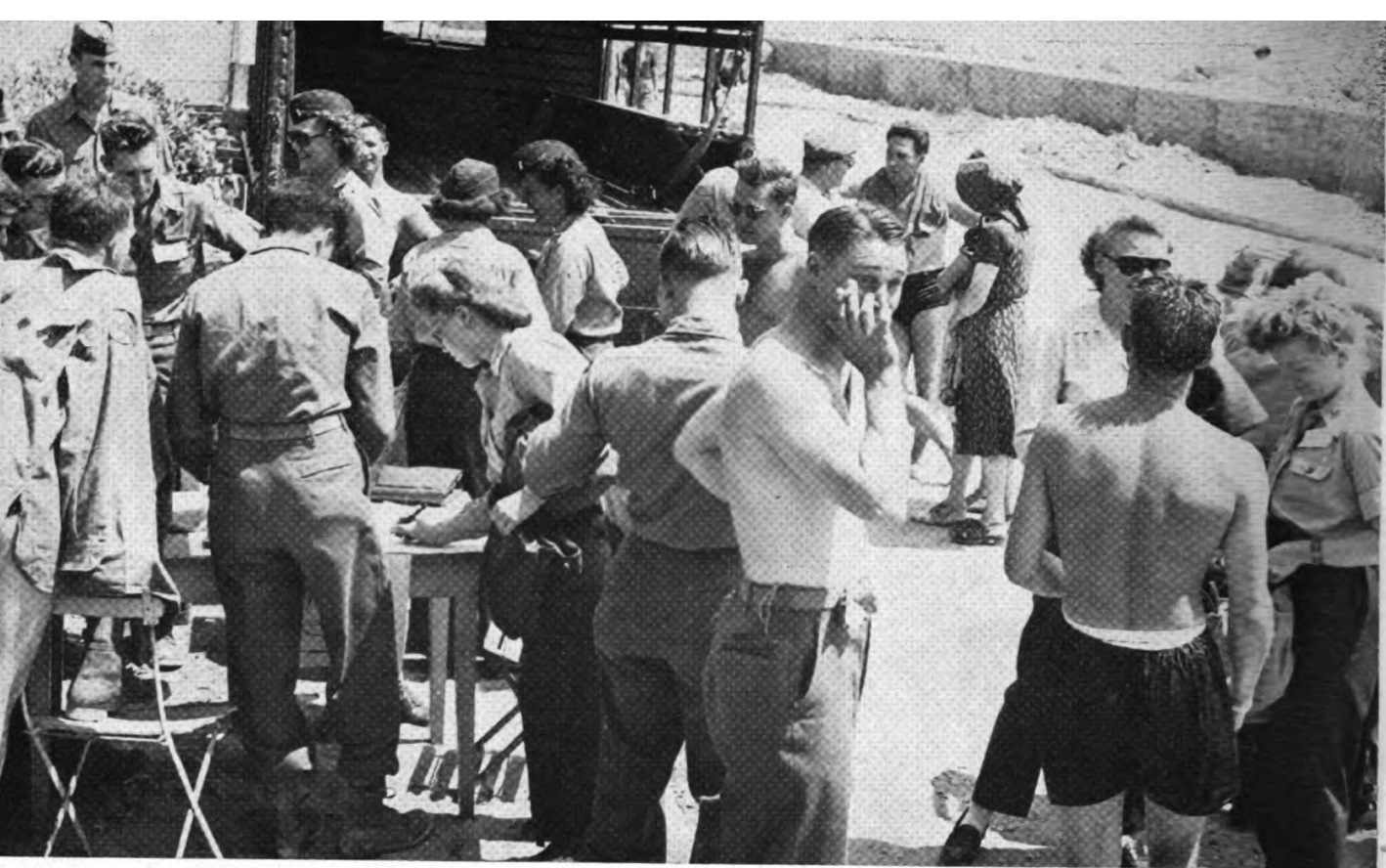
By the 1st of August the final offensive against Japan was coordinated with the Russians. On August 6 the first atomic bomb was released on Hiroshima, wiping out 60 per cent of the city.





About the only form of entertainment for stagees at Arles and St. Victoret were movies and USO shows, most of which were class D. Among the better were top performers like Mickey Rooney and Bob Hope. Few Panthermen in a hurry to get somewhere in France will forget scenes like the one above . . . a Frenchman and his flock blocking the road.





Looking into the future, General Kramer spent much time in making possible the organization of the Panther Veterans Association, boasting nearly 40,000 members. The organization held many picnics like the one above on the shores of the Mediterranean where American nurses from a nearby hospital were guests. Another favorite spot of Panthermen was the Riviera where swimming was wonderful at Nice (below right) and Cannes.

The warm Mediterranean sun made work uncomfortable but swimming along the beach was wonderful. At the left three Panthermen set up their portable radio along the beach near Ste. Maria de LaMer, scene of many picnics of the Panther Veterans Association. German barbed wire defenses still hemmed in the beach.





During the operation at Marseille, Division headquarters was at Chateau Ville Pail, a mile north of St. Martin du Crau. At the left is one of the many shady lanes for which France is righteously famous and which made riding in an open jeep a genuine pleasure. Below General Kramer decorates the grave of an American flyer shot down near Arles.





Two days later Russia joined the war against the Japs with a powerful drive into Manchuria. The second atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, crumbling all Japanese aspirations to world domination. They surrendered to General MacArthur on the 14th.

End of the war in the Pacific was the signal for wild and riotous celebrations in the Arles and St. Victoret staging areas. It meant that instead of going to the CBI, the men in the areas would probably go to the states. They cut loose with German Schmeiseers, Lugers, Very pistols and even 30 calibre machine guns firing tracers. The MP's had a rough time getting things quiet.

Just about this time the Division received a

Late in the summer of '45, re-deployment began in the 66th. First to go were low score men of the 266th Engineer battalion who were assigned to an engineer regiment bound for the CBI. However, the war ended before the regiment got underway for the Pacific and many of the Panthermen found themselves eligible for discharge. Pictured below and opposite page is part of the farewell ceremonies of the Battalion's men at Arles. Late in the summer, too, General Kramer left the division for an assignment back at Camp Rucker. Replacing him was Major General Walter E. Lauer, former CG of the 99th. General Lauer is at the upper left.





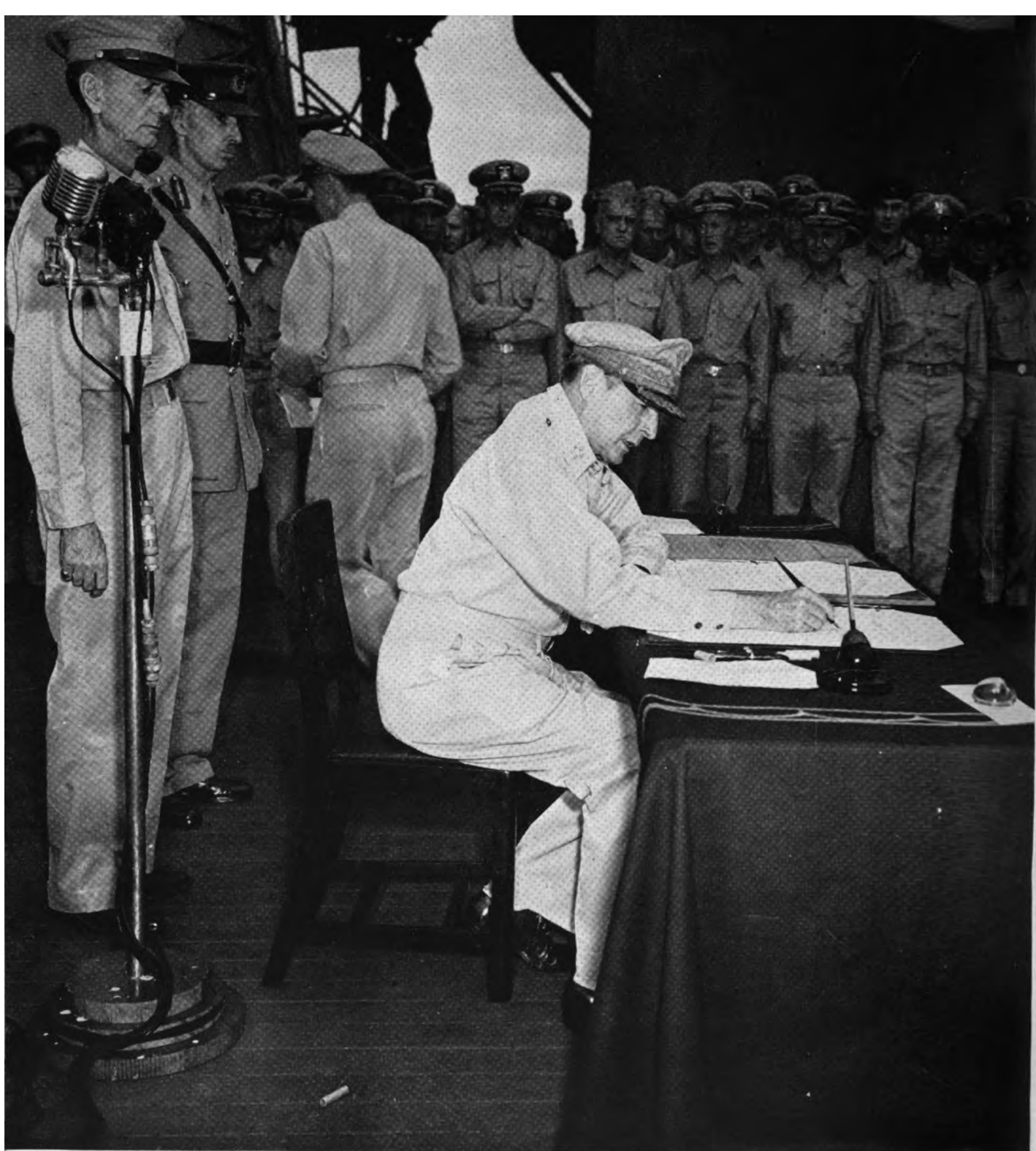
new commanding general, Major General Walter E. Lauer, former CG of the 99th Infantry. He replaced General Kramer who went to the states.

With the world once more at peace, redeployment became the favorite subject of conversation. B-Bag in Stars and Stripes was full of suggestions on how soldiers should be sent home. The 66th was scheduled for re-deployment late in October and eventual de-activation, but that didn't mean that all Panthermen were going home. Because of our isolated battle, the division received only one battle star, five points, that didn't go far towards making 85. Most of the men in the Division, especially the replacements, had a relatively short length of service before they came overseas. So although the 66th was scheduled to go home, it was little more than a carrier for high point Com Z men.

The real 66th Division moved to occupation jobs. A lot of the men went into Germany while the bulk went to the 42nd Division in Austria. Although there were a lot of long faces among Austria-bound Panthermen as they saw others board boats for the states, the frowns turned to

smiles when they arrived in Salzburg, Linz, and Vienna. Here were the best permanent billets men of the Division had ever enjoyed. Chow was excellent and the recreational facilities in the Bavarian Alps in places like Fuschl am See and Sell am See, were superb. Many found time to make trips into Switzerland and down to Italy because duties in Austria were relatively light. Panthermen literally took over Austria and the patch was in evidence everywhere. Men of the 66th wore it proudly and many a unit commander commented that Panthermen were the best disciplined and most soldierly bunch of men in Austria.

And 66th men never forgot they were once buddies . . . they stuck together. In practically any section of any headquarters in Austria, a Pantherman in need could find another Pantherman to help him out. Had the general been in Austria to see the men he had trained, he would have been proud. Their loyalty and allegiance to the Black Panther Division is a superb endorsement of what the general always maintained: "Comradeships forged in battle never grow cold."



Panthermen rejoiced as General of the Army Douglas MacArthur signed the Japanese surrender document ending the last phase of the global war. With his signature, General MacArthur squelched all rumors that the 66th would go to the CBI for more combat. Instead, the Division prepared to take its high pointers home and send the rest to Austria and parts of Germany for occupation duty.



For those Panthermen who weren't lucky enough to go home with the Division and were sent to occupation duty, a "good deal" was a week's vacation in the Bavarian Alps. There many learned to ski under expert instruction from former Olympic champions. Accommodations were excellent, too . . . like the former home of Nazi War Criminal Von Ribbentrop at the lower right, located just south of Salzburg, Austria.





Vienna, as Americans had always pictured, was gay. True, it had suffered from the war. The retreating Germans, angered at losing the city, shelled it with incendiaries for 12 days. American flyers bombed it. But by the time Panthermen arrived for occupation duty, music again filled the cafes and night clubs. The opera and symphony orchestra played every night. Art exhibits were opening their doors. It was still fashionable to take a Sunday afternoon stroll through the beautiful Vienna woods (below) located on Leopoldsburg and Kahlenberg, two high hills north of the city. Vienna was divided into four zones with each of the four powers administering one.



Although Vienna was gay, there were many who suffered. The civilian diet of 1,500 calories per day was rarely met despite heavy shipments by UNRRA. Principal staple food was dried peas which Viennese ate three times a day. Bread was scarce. Rare were meat, fish, flour, salt, sugar, milk, coffee. Digging into garbage cans to augment their diet was so common in Vienna that two American officers don't even look around as a well-dressed man at the right looks for food. Heat was non-existent, even in the middle of winter, and people walked miles to the Vienna woods to gather twigs for cooking. Otherwise they ate their meals cold. Whenever a horse fell dead on the street . . . and it was not uncommon because of the lack of fodder . . . and there was no gasoline . . . policemen had to establish a guard over the carcass in behalf of the owner. Otherwise little but bones would remain of the animal within a short time.



**BEYOND THE
HORIZON**

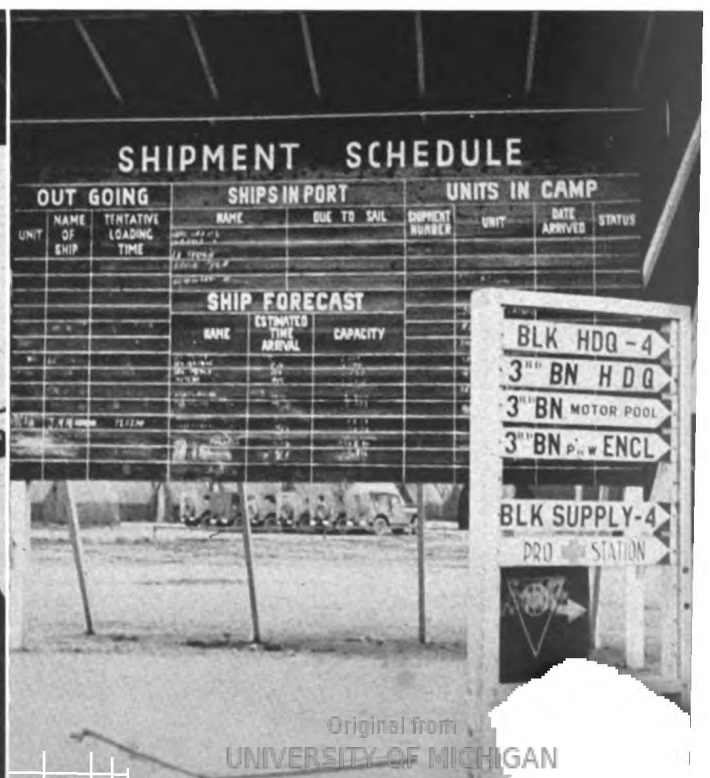
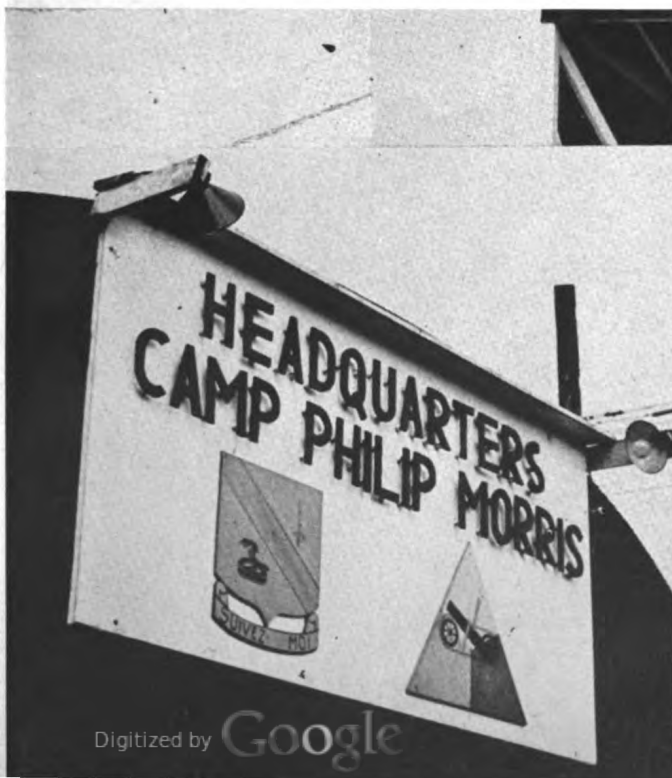
H O M E





For those Panthermen who remained behind for occupation duty in Germany, or Austria, re-deployment generally began with a trip by railroad to a port camp like Philip Morris at LeHavre, France. Many made the trip in 40 et 8's while those more fortunate had the advantage of coach cars . . . some heated but most of them cold. The trip took anywhere from two days to a week, depending on how much the engineer was prodded. None will forget the long halts in dirty freight yards where trains sometimes tied up for days with no apparent reason.

Delays at ports, where men counted hours instead of weeks or months as they did before they entered the pipeline, were many and most were the direct result of lack of shipping space. Irritated men deluged B-Bag of Stars and Stripes with bitter denunciation of everything from British war brides to the army transportation corps. Finally a bulletin board of all ship movements was put up in camp to enable every staggie to see clearly the shipping situation and to give him some idea when he could expect to board ship. Normal lengths of stay at Philip Morris was from a week to 10 days.



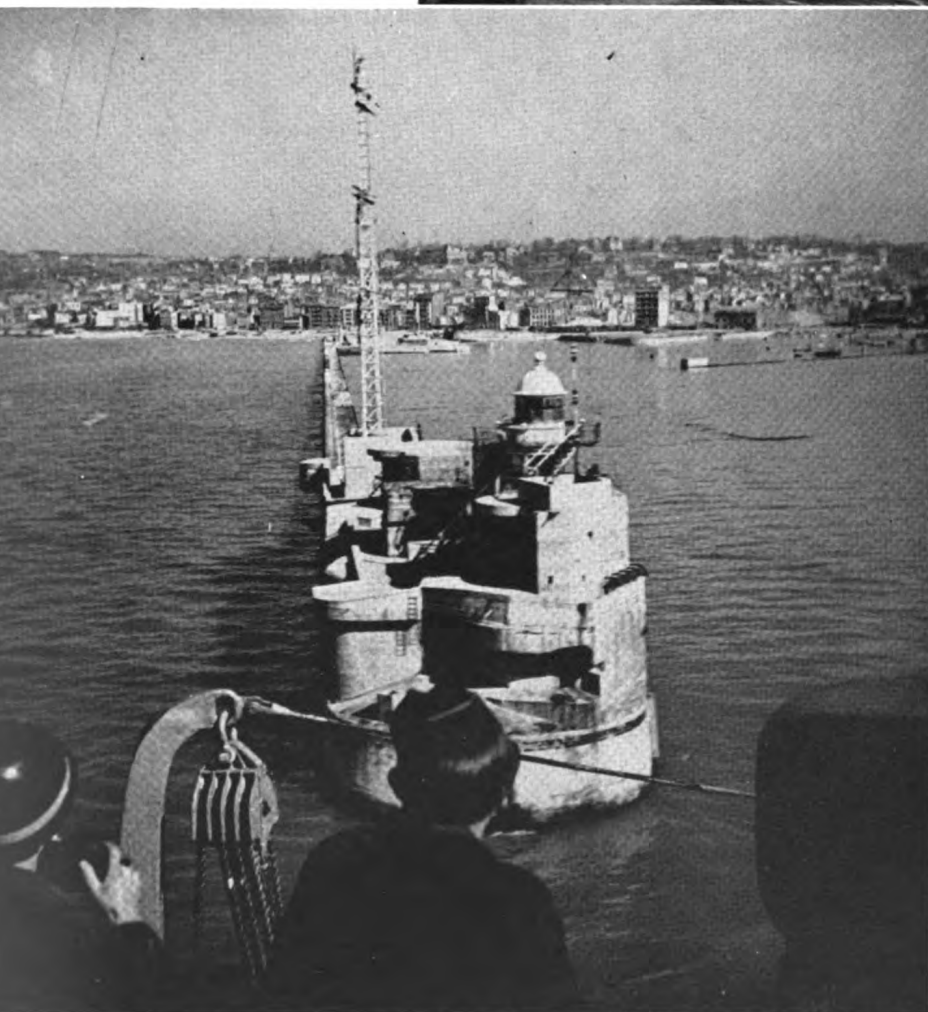


Perhaps the most thrilling moment in a soldier's life comes when he steps up the gangplank to board a ship bound for home. Here one of the large ships moored at the gigantic floating dock at LeHavre takes on a load of soldiers, including many Panthermen, for the States. For administration purposes on the way home, men were split up into companies and loaded in alphabetical order according to rank.



Signs on the old German pillboxes still intact at the water's edge bade the soldiers "Bon Voyage" as they boarded ship. Men jammed the railings to watch the stream of soldiers pour aboard ship in process that took as long as 24 to 36 hours on the bigger crafts. But nobody minded waiting then. Once aboard ship everybody settled down for the voyage home, hoping the weather would be calm but not caring too much either way.

Soldiers on their way home
crammed the decks of the ship
as it pulled away from the
floating pier at LeHavre,
stretching their necks for a
last look at the European
theater.



Just before the boat entered the high seas, it passed the last mark of what
was once a completely German-dominated Europe . . . a lighthouse in the
outer harbor fortified with concrete pillboxes.



Except for the deep inner thrill every soldier experienced as he anticipated his arrival home, life aboard ship to the States was pretty dull. Aboard most boats a chaplain was able to supply a few instruments and that's all it took to have an impromptu concert or jam session out on deck during sunny weather. An occasional lifeboat drill broke the monotony.





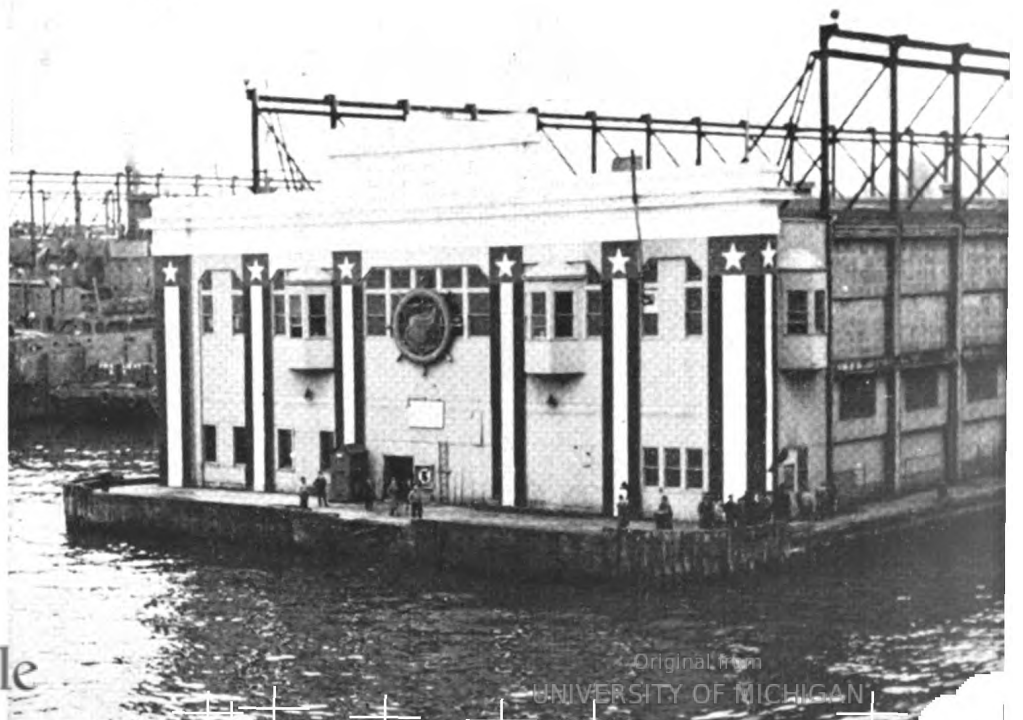
By the time the harbor came into view, a transportation corps yacht with a service band and an "official" reception committee came out to greet returning servicemen. Over an amplifier system they played popular airs that sounded like music from heaven.



To any returning vet, the most beautiful noises in the world are the many tugs tooting welcome to the troopship.



Most troop carriers landed at Staten Island's pier 15 where soldiers clambered over each other, eager to put their feet on solid American soil. A ferry took them to Jersey where they boarded trains for Camp Kilmer and then to separation centers.





And this is the last scene. With his discharge badge sewed on his blouse, his final pay in his pocket and usually his musette bag filled with German loot, the soldier waits at a separation center railroad depot for a train home. Victorious in combat, he's headed for home where he will renew old ties in civilian life. He'll put away his uniform but ever present and vivid will be memories of his army days. They were often rough and dirty and enough to try men's souls, but as the years roll on, he'll refer to them time and time again as the "good old days."

APPENDIX

Lest We Forget . . .

CAMP BUCHENWALD

When Camp Buchenwald was opened in July, 1937, the prisoners who died there were cremated in Weimar, because the mounting death rate behind the camp walls, the necessity of concealing the amount of death cases arose. For this reason, a cremation plant in the camp was erected, which the inmates of the camp had to build. Later, modern installations were put in. The cremation took place in two large stoves, the capacity of which were eight bodies at a time. Cold, lack of proper clothing, hunger, and disease took a sizable toll of prisoners. More died from torture, and as the result of experiments on human beings performed in the "scientific testing station" of the camp. The average amount was 60 to 70 corpses a day. Later, this figure grew and the crematorium became insufficient. The "production" had to be kept up day and night. Especially when transports started to arrive from the nearby camps Dora and Laura. The amount of people detailed to serve at the stoves grew constantly. Large convoys of trucks arrived daily to dump heaps of corpses behind the fence screening the cremation plants. Sometimes the bodies remained in the small yard in front of the cremation plant because the capacity of the stove was insufficient. The cremation building served not only for disposal of bodies, but was also used by the SS administration of the camp as a place of execution. They used to hang political prisoners, people convicted by military court and so-called popular courts. For this purpose a gallows was erected in the yard of the crematorium. The gallows could be used for seven people simultaneously. The hanging was performed by the prisoners under the supervision of the SS. In some cases the camp commander or his secretary used to attend the executions. The gallows was used not only to dispose of the inmates but often to hang people from outside of the camp, mostly Poles. Mass executions (as many as 25 at a time) used to be performed in public. The last mass hanging took place in March (16 men executed by order of the SS Reichsfuehrer Himmler). Prisoners whom the management of the camp wanted killed or had to kill in a hurry used to be corraled into the crematorium and pushed through a special shaft down the cellar, where SS personnel awaited them in order to hang them in a way which prolonged the agony of dying. Sometimes the process was speeded up by blows of a heavy mallet. From the cellar, the bodies used to be transported to the cremation room in an electric elevator. At times this crematorium employed details of 60 to 70 men; their duties included unloading of bodies, stringing of clothing, sorting and transporting to a cleaning plant. They had to perform this macabre and sad work in shifts, day and night. In exchange, they used to be treated better than the rest of the prisoners by the SS, receiving more food and some tobacco; but on the other hand, they had no doubts that sooner or later they would be liquidated as witnesses to the crimes of the SS. In the beginning, the ashes of the prisoners could be obtained by the family for a fee of 50 marks. Later this was discontinued due to the lack of time. The administration of Camp Buchenwald organized a special registration bureau for the purpose of keeping

track of the dead and the notification of the families. This last practice was discontinued after a couple of years. The amount of official death certificates given by the camp physician is 32,705. This does not include liquidation of Russian transports and murders committed by the SS. The statistics from 1 January 1945 is as follows: In January, from the average of 61,000 prisoners, 6,477 died. In February from a total of 62,000 prisoners, 5,614 died. In March, from a total of 82,000 prisoners, 5,479 died. From 3 to 10 April, 915 prisoners died from hunger and malnutrition. After the arrival of American troops the death rate immediately decreased due to help in the form of food, the care of medical men, and their effort to save the sick and disabled. Endless columns of supplies poured into the camp from the Army of De Gaulle, the French Catholic charity units, the German Red Cross, and the Third U. S. Army. Immediately upon liberation by the American troops a committee consisting of prisoners of all nationalities was created. This committee directed an appeal to the population of Weimar for help in the form of provisions. In most of the cases, this appeal gave satisfactory results, and before long peasant carts started to roll into the camp, loaded with potatoes, bread and milk. The information service of the committee kept the prisoners—now free people—informed about the progress of the rescue work. The water situation in the camp was critical due to the destruction of water mains during the retreat of the SS. The kitchen had no water for cooking, and toilets became cesspools until relief came in the form of water tanks, hauled mostly by the American troops. Unfortunately, a large number of former prisoners are still sick, the hospitals in the camp filled, and the death rate due to physical damages beyond repair is still dreadful. The SS removed a large number of the camp prisoners prior to the entry of American units, leaving only 21,000 in the camp. Among them are still approximately 3,150 invalids and aged requiring hospitalization, and 4,300 invalids and children who require special care. (Source: First U. S. Army Periodic Report No. 326.)

HITLER

Preamble

PW, Lt. Col., has been with the historical section of the ORW during peacetime. He later kept the war diary at the Fuehrerhauptquartier. Then he was transferred from this Hq. because he was considered politically unreliable. Before that, however, he had ample opportunity to see Hitler in action. He became acquainted with him on a more personal basis also, since he has eaten at the same table with him at least about 80 times. PW feels an icy hatred for him and his regime. In his description of the Fuehrer, however, he speaks without bias or emotion.

HITLER'S DAY

Hitler gets up at about eleven or eleven-thirty in the morning, half an hour later the first reports and briefings are given to him in the operations room of the Fuehrerhauptquartier. At approximately 1400 he eats a frugal meal and then takes his post-prandial nap of about an hour's duration. He again returns to the operations room

and continues to receive reports, briefings; various plans are discussed. Jodl and Keitel usually officiate. This continues until 2000 o'clock when a few select—usually some party members and a few trusted staff officers—convene for supper. While this is the main meal, it is as simple as one could imagine. Hitler's repast usually consists of some vegetable stew, followed by stewed fruit as dessert. This he tops with one or two glasses of beer (the extent of his alcoholic indulgence). Hitler eats rapidly, mechanically. For him food is merely an indispensable means of subsistence. In the course of a few minutes he is finished, but the entire meal usually lasts two hours. He does not smoke, and it is strictly forbidden to smoke in his presence as he seems to be very susceptible to laryngitis. All members of the table engage in general topics of conversation. Quite often Hitler will sit there throughout the entire meal, turned to his own thoughts, seemingly without listening to the talk going on around him. However, he does follow the drift of the conversation vaguely, to him the conversation seems to have the effect that music has to others; it stimulates his thought and relaxes him. Very often though he will suddenly seize upon a topic of conversation that is being discussed. This sudden turn of interest is unpredictable—it is merely that something dropped in the course of the discussion has captivated his imagination. He will then monopolize the conversation for one or two hours at a time, holding forth at length on any one subject. He does not address himself to anyone in particular, his eyes always assume a distant stare, rarely attaching themselves to any person or object in the room. His listeners then have the impression as if he were talking to some huge, unseen audience.

Hitler acts, speaks and thinks like a typical autocrat. The basis of his discourse usually will be something that he has picked up from a book that he has read recently. Hitler's great gift is his adroit simplification of a complex problem, an aptitude that is often found in self-taught people. He will take a problem, and to him it will resolve itself into a perfectly simple thing. His highly trained staff officers might have been wrestling with some problem which to him appears quite simple. Sometimes he hits upon the right solution with uncanny intuition, and sometimes he engages in dangerous oversimplification.

He talked in a mellow baritone, without that raucous, unpleasant stridency of his public speeches. At the table and in his speech he showed many facets of his rather uncouth behavior. He would abstractedly bite his fingernails, he would run his index finger back and forth under his nose, and his table manners were a little short of shocking.

The assembly usually left the table around 2200, and Hitler with his staff officers would receive the latest reports in the operations room. This final conference of the day would last until about 2400 or 0100. He would retire into his private chambers with some trusted high-ranking members of the party, where they would eat various snacks and listen to the phonograph. Hitler himself sipped some health tea during these hours of intimacy and ate prodigious amounts of cake (this cake eating was responsible for a slight digestive disorder and the addition of a "bay window" to his already not too fortunate figure).

Hitler had a beautiful console-model phonograph with a high-class library of classic records. Wagner and Beethoven were his favorites, in that order. He would produce some of these albums at these sessions with his friends, and listen to the music with passion and rapture, if not artistic understanding.

Around 0200 he went out in the open, to walk up and down in front of his bunker. He always took his daily walk at night, completely alone. Hitler was highly susceptible to the sun which seemed to affect his brain in some way. Generally he was a man that lived at night.

At four in the morning Hitler would retire into his bedroom and go to bed. However, for the next two hours he would not sleep. He now started to read. Usually he went through two books during these hours. He did not actually read, but skimmed. He had a very clever method of skimming through the books and always managed to get the gist. Fragments of these books always turned up later in his conversations at the table. At 0400 he would go to sleep.

HIS PERSONALITY

PW states that it is difficult to understand Hitler, but not because he is what one would call a complex personality, but rather because some of his characteristics are grotesquely exaggerated. Thus, at times he could be almost inhumanly hard. Some instances illustrate this:

One evening, shortly after the zenith of Rommel's success in Africa a telegram arrived indicating that Rommel intended to withdraw. Hitler saw the telegram at that time. Later that night, at four in the morning, another telegram arrived from Rommel stating that he was now withdrawing. In view of the previous telegram which Hitler had seen, the duty officer, some Major or Lt. Col., decided that it need not be brought to the Fuehrer's immediate attention. The next day Hitler saw the telegram. His wrath was immense, and he ordered that the duty officer report to him immediately. When the officer appeared before him he fumed: "If you say even as much as one word in your own defense, I shall have you shot."

The officer at first did not have the slightest idea what it was all about. It appeared then that he should have brought the second telegram to Hitler's attention as soon as it arrived. The Fuehrer heaped abuse upon him, and minutes later, when he left Hitler's office, he was a private of the army. That same day, with the heavy pack of the common soldier on his back, he made an hour's march to the RR station, bound for service with some outfit on the coast of France.

On the other hand, Hitler seemed to be a man of extremely few but intense emotions and affections. As far as is known he has never had a close friend outside of Hess. Hitler loved him like a brother. Instinctively perhaps Hitler felt that Hess carried the germ of a latent insanity, and it just served to increase the Fuehrer's affection and solicitude for the man. Many times Hess asked him that he be permitted to tour the fronts on inspection. Hitler forbade him straight out to entertain the idea. However, at one time he gave in and Hess was to undertake an inspection tour of the front. Hitler saw the general staff officer personally who was to conduct Hess on this tour, and he warned him repeatedly not to allow Hess within the range of fire. The officer was threatened with severe punishment should anything ever happen to Hess. And while Hess was gone the Fuehrer was beyond himself for fear that something might happen to him after all. However, when Hess made his flight to Scotland, Hitler bore the loss stoically enough, never giving any outward signs that the loss had hurt him.

HITLER AS A MILITARY LEADER

Before the war broke out Hitler considered himself anything but a great military leader. It must be admitted, however, that he was very technically minded and he

was outstanding in recognizing the importance of mechanized equipment in modern warfare. Thus when Guderan propounded his radically new theories on armored warfare, it was Hitler especially that recognized their merit and brought his influence to bear in order to overcome the traditional stodginess of the Prussian general staff in matters of technical improvement. Through his ability to view highly complex problems without the reserve and caution of the expert, he was capable of seeing things and saying things that startled his professional military leaders. Thus, before the invasion of Poland, and later the Scandinavian countries and France, he was perfectly uninhibited by any of these considerations which make the specialist so earth-bound. German staff officers admit that he was the one that provided the momentum of recklessness and dare-deviledness which so characterized German strategic moves at that time. The general staff was frankly astonished when these operations were so patently successful. They conceded that Hitler had been right, and a few of them even began to believe that Hitler possessed some inexplicable intuition which perceived things in military plans which to them were just cut-and-dry problems. Thus the opposition of the general staff was not so strong any more when Hitler decided that he again sensed something which to his mind minimized the difficulty of operations against Russia.

A vastly different matter was the publicity campaign in Germany which extolled Hitler as the greatest military genius of all times. This campaign was touched off by Goering, and radio and press jangled with the new eulogy of the Fuehrer. And while the military experts could only shake their head over his good guesses, political circles and the whole of Germany resounded to this praise of the great military genius. Strangely enough, Hitler himself became very susceptible to this propaganda. He then actually started believing that he was a man of exceptional ability in the science of warfare. When he drew the Luftwaffe away from its assault on England, he was convinced that after the conquest of Russia which would take from 3-6 months, he would be able to launch a new, more concentrated and final attack upon England. It was to no avail that a Japanese military commission appeared before him and warned him not to attack Russia, since, based upon Japan's own experience with China, it was practically impossible to conquer a country of such huge geographical dimensions. Several of the staff officers pleaded with him to stay away from Russia since the German army, strong as it might be, would lose itself in the vastness of Russia like a river in the desert. But Hitler knew he was right.

Later, when the German army stood before Stalingrad, Hitler was seized by a fanatical determination to take that city. Probably the name of the city had a good deal to do with goading him. When the Sixth Army was encircled his staff officers advised him to pull the army back. Even when the Russian forces around the army had grown to a ring 50 km. wide, Paulus asked urgently for permission to push his army back into the German lines. Paulus was so embittered when this was refused that he remarked that he had been betrayed.

Stalingrad was a turning point for Hitler in more ways than one. Hitler turned completely into himself. He became sullen, more short-tempered. Those familiar supporters to which he used to invite the inner circle, fell away. His nightly walk in front of his bunker became longer. He was more and more alone. It seemed that in any discussion of military set-backs he sensed criticism of his own leadership. At one time Hitler, quite oblivious of what he was doing, ordered certain units to concentrate on a certain town. The result was a fantastic concentration of armor in a small sector. In the confusion that resulted Hitler asked that the corps commander be court-martialed. A general staff officer with Hitler pointed out that he, Hitler himself, had ordered this maneuver. "Where do you read that?" Hitler snarled in quick rage. "In the war diary," the staff officer replied. Hitler did not say anything else, but on the same day the officers of the war history received strictest orders that in the future no reference was to be made to Hitler's orders in operational matters in the war diary, and that his interference in operations was not even to be referred to by implication. Furthermore, he ordered that six stenographers be on hand at all times to take down verbally the operational discussions, briefings, etc., in the operations room. The stenographic reports were typed in one copy only (in the special large type for Hitler's use since he was farsighted), and after a staff officer spent considerable time in correcting the transcript (the stenographers employed had no training for this type of work), Hitler locked this single copy in his own safe to which only he had access thereafter. It was a weapon which Hitler wanted to have in battling the keen minds of his generals.

PW was emphatic in his belief that in 1939 Hitler did not have the slightest aspiration for world domination. His mind was that of a typical Austrian—land-bound and awkward in perceiving any interests beyond those of the continent. For this reason the question of German colonies was never given any great emphasis. When Hitler contemplated the invasion of Poland the staff officers were for a large part against the move, because they feared that England would make good her threat to enter the war on the side of Poland. Blomberg advised Hitler earlier that not until 1942 would Germany be ready for the type of war which this move entailed. Hitler, however, was naively convinced that the operation would be confined to Poland itself. He did not think for one moment that England (which he always had respected and feared very much) would set herself up against his plans. Such was Hitler's mentality at that time he thought the Polish campaign would be a matter of about two months, and after that he would be able to undertake the grandiloquent architectural plans for Germany (which he had already set in motion by raising the center of Berlin to make room for a great architectural pageant). It may be that this architectural hobby of his was replaced by his aspirations to become history's great military genius. (Prior to the war it had been observed that Hitler would lock himself up in his room for three days at a time, after which he would come forth with his drawings for some great public building. PW who saw some of these plans did not think that they bore witness to any but mediocre talent).

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JAPANESE NOTE ON SCHMIDT REACHES SWISS FOREIGN OFFICE

Tide of Joy Rises in U.S. Through Throng of Celebrators *Seooooo Sorry!!* *Aerial Fleet Strike Fiercely at Jap Islands* *Domei Report Jap Surrender*

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